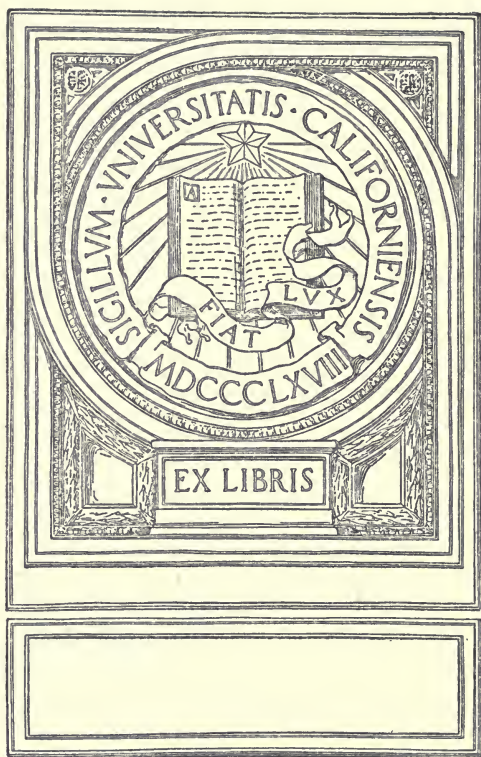


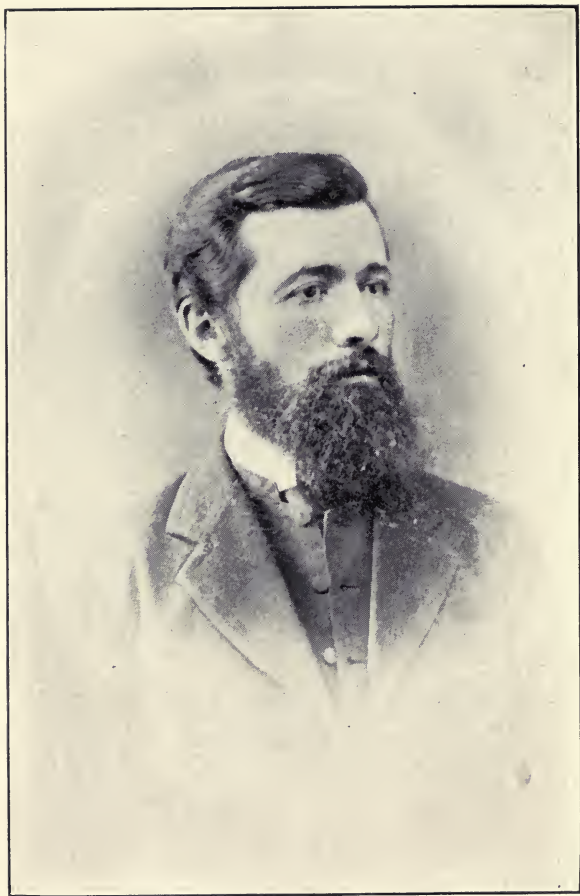
# IN THE DAYS OF THE RED RIVER REBELLION



*M. Douyall*



W.E.B.S.



JOHN MCDOUGALL.

*From a photograph taken in 1872.*



IN THE DAYS  
OF THE  
RED RIVER REBELLION

*LIFE AND ADVENTURE IN THE FAR  
WEST OF CANADA*

(1868-1872)

BY

JOHN McDougall,

Author of "Forest, Lake and Prairie," "Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe,"  
"Pathfinding on Plain and Prairie," etc.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. E. LAUGHLIN  
AND PORTRAITS*

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year one thousand nine hundred and three, by WILLIAM  
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TO MY  
VERY MUCH ESTEEMED FRIEND  
AND PATRON  
**Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal**  
THIS  
VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
BY  
THE AUTHOR.

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# IN THE DAYS OF THE RED RIVER REBELLION.

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## CHAPTER I.

Primitive transport—The “buckboard”—New country—  
Edmonton—A pioneer parsonage—House-building—  
Fishing—A race for noble game—A birthday feast—A  
motley company.

DURING the autumn of 1868, and on the last page of “Pathfinding on Plain and Prairie,” I bade my kind reader adieu, with the promise that if opportunity came I would sometime resume my narrative of life and adventure in the far West. As yet but little change had come upon the scene; primeval conditions still largely obtained throughout that great region. The party I had guided into the beautiful valley of the Saskatchewan (as related in the closing chapters of my last volume) had left the banks of the Mississippi several months before, and by dint of continuous travel and many weeks of camping on the trail, had succeeded in reaching this distant spot. These people had left railway

transport far to the south-east of this big upland country. Away under the Stars and Stripes they had said farewell for long years to what might fittingly be called civilized modes of travel. The ox-cart, the heavily burdened waggon, the prairie schooner, were slow in pace, and when one took into consideration the great wilderness, with its bridgeless and ferryless rivers and its thousands of miles of ungraded trails and utter solitude, so far as man was concerned, the enterprise of those few who ventured into this distant field seemed sublime.

This little party brought with them the first buckboards to come into Manitoba and the North-West. Hitherto the Red River cart had reigned supreme—the aristocracy of the land had nothing better; but now the light and easy-riding buckboard came to conquer, and with base ingratitude the cart was relegated to the plebeian work of freighting only. No more of the dangling of one's legs over the front bar of this wooden coach; good-bye forever to the dulcet tones of squeaking axles and the shrieking of unbushed hubs! No, gentlemen, we are making history, we are entering on an epoch of development with the arrival of the springless buckboard. God bless the man whose brain caught the glorious idea and who thus became a benefactor to all who ventured upon the great

continents beyond the limits of steam. Even as a palace Pullman coach is to a loaded flat-car, so is the buckboard to an honest Red River cart. We can speak feelingly, if not regretfully.

Forward the Star of Empire takes her course, and we on a glorious day in September of 1868, with but a portion of the original party, move onward and westward. Up along the north bank of the big Saskatchewan we ride and roll; across lovely bits of prairie, through dense woods where the road as yet has been barely cut out and countless stumps are in omnipresent evidence; the heavens above a sea of glory, and the earth beneath full of autumn grass and herbage and foliage colored and tinted and gorgeous. Ever and anon the graceful and majestic bends and stretches of this mighty river are at our feet. Over thousands of acres of rich soil, down into and across numerous streams and creeks—the three “Was-uh-huh-de-nows,” the Sucker, the Vermilion, the Deep, the Sturgeon, and many others—all arteries feeding the giant river. The stream is the father of the river, even as the child is the father of the man, and the individual the progenitor of the nation. This is why we are camping and rolling and straining and working up the slopes of a great continent. We are here to preach and live loyalty to God and country, to make men strong



and true; therefore we worry along. What matters an upset, and serious loss in consequence? Who cares for breaking axles and snapping dowelpins, and splitting felloes and ripping harness, dew and rain and mud and cold and storm, and sometimes hunger, and always danger? Behold, to the true pioneer these are counted as nothing in order that the making of the man, the building of the citizen, may go on and the world be made better.

Excepting my own family, our party is entirely tenderfoot. The Rev. Peter Campbell and wife and children are with us, also Mr. A. I. Snider, who has come out as teacher, and a sturdy Scotchman with his Red River native wife; these latter going with us to Pigeon Lake, and Messrs. Campbell and Snider to Edmonton. Even in a small party of tenderfeet there is striking variety in point of vision. As we gather around the camp-fires we listen and hear such talk as this: "Oh, what a big country! months of constant travel, and it is still before us!" "Room for millions!" "Splendid soil!" "Rich grass!" "What glorious landscapes!" "Pure air, clear skies!" "Surely this is God's country!" and in our hearts and minds we say, verily it is God's country. Then it is another voice that speaks, and what we hear is thus: "What a fool I was to leave Ontario!" the



"O——h" long drawn out, almost a wail; "Such horrible roads!" "Such barren wastes!" "A beastly, dirty country, only fit for dogs and breeds and wild animals!" "Oh, I'm tired of this endless journey!" "My, my, how some men will lie about a country!" "Surely this mud and these tormenting mosquitoes, and these infernal bulldogs, and these constant bridgeless streams, I hate them! oh, why did I ever come out here into this God-forsaken and beastly land?" and so on through all the gamut of execration.

But now we are approaching Edmonton. This is a prominent place; has been on the map of Britain's empire for scores of years, has been a "station" in the Minutes of a large Conference for a long time. Are there any hotels? None. Are there any churches? One, a Roman Catholic. How many stores? One, the Hudson's Bay Company. What is the population? From twenty to one hundred and fifty; and in tones of bitter disappointment the sad traveller turns away with the despairing comment: "And this is the end of it all! Oh, my, what folly to send us out to such a place." Well, just here we are in accord, and sometimes even wise men make mistakes in their disposition of humanity. Edmonton, as she really is, stands for the centredness of the great Saskatchewan country—the centre

in religion, government, commerce, transport. Within the four walls of yonder little fort, and within its wooden bastions and picket sides, large business is conducted and far-reaching measures are planned. Its tentacles run out and grip this country in all directions. The population, we have just said, was from twenty to one hundred and fifty. We meant in this the residents of the post, for outside its walls hundreds, sometimes thousands, encamped. Hither the tribes came up for trade and barter, as also for war and revenge; here many a temporary peace was patched up and again broken; here scenes of butchery and rapine and murder took place, and it was truly wonderful how this stout little frontier post had held its own throughout the years, amidst such constant turbulence and strife. The policy of the great Fur Company had much to do with this. They took sides with none, they were the friends of all; theirs was truly a paternal attitude to every Indian in this whole land.

And now in this autumn of 1868 we are at Edmonton, and those of our party destined for this point remain, while we go on. This time fortunately there is a scow, and by dint of much pulling and tracking we cross our carts and stock, and climb the southern bank, and keep our eyes alert as we move up athwart the con-

verging trails, upon all or any of which our enemy might come. To-day we are fortunate, and we slip away into the timber country between here and Pigeon Lake with a growing sense of security ; and yet we watch and listen and safeguard as best we may, and travel on and reach our home on the northern shore of this forest-fringed lake. If we have any home, this is the spot. Here we began in 1864, and for two years this mission was, I am bound to say, unique in the fact of its being maintained without any contributed funds. It cost the Society it served not one farthing. We hunted and fished and trapped, and, like our people, were nomads, sometimes feasting and then starving ; for, such was the energy of our life, I cannot say we fasted. During the last two years we have had a humble salary, which has had to perform the cantilever act and lift us out of the hole of the past as well as hold down the present. Now we have a simple home, a one-roomed shanty, and in line with this another similar for our man. Ours has been kitchen, dining-room and sleeping apartment. In it we have held many public services and councils, and entertained various guests—Hudson's Bay officials, wandering missionaries, and vagrant Indians. Horse-thieves and war parties have stopped with us for the night, and we have

watched them sleep, and stood guard over their every action until the next day relieved us of the anxiety of their presence.

We now went to work to add another room to our house, and soon the logs were up and the chimney built. My man and myself were, between the intervals of hunting and fishing, exceedingly busy sawing lumber for the floor of this new room, when a couple of travellers came upon us from the West, an altogether unexpected quarter. These proved to be an English half-breed, House by name, and Henry Hardisty, whose brother Richard was my sister's husband. These men had come across the mountain by the Vermilion Pass, and, reaching the Rocky Mountain fort, had come by way of Buck Lake to Pigeon Lake as the safest and most secure route to Edmonton; for the southern Indians had so often ambushed and slain small parties of white men passing through the country, that the way was fraught with extreme peril. Of course these camped with us for the night. It was a delightful change for us to have intercourse with men who came from afar, and to listen to their story of travel and adventure on the Pacific slope.

During the course of the evening, spent in the blaze of our chimney fire, Hardisty noticed my skates hanging on the wall, and inquired if I could skate. I answered, "Some." Again came

the question, how fast could I skate? I answered that I had never timed myself. "Could I skate eight miles an hour?" And I laughingly answered, "I would not think much of my running without skates if I did not do better than that." Then my new-found friend began to take an interest in me; he evidently admired speed—said he was quite a sprinter himself; had more than once run among the miners and Indians in Washington and Oregon, where he was known as the "Pondura antelope"; strongly advised me to go over there and make a vast deal more money by running and athletics than I possibly could by preaching in this country. He, like a good many more I have met, did not quite comprehend our estimates of values.

Holding meetings at home, visiting adjacent camps, building and making lumber, plastering and mudding and preparing for winter, and all the while keeping a good lookout for the approach of a wily enemy, thus occupied the short days and long nights found us busy. And now that the lake was frozen over, the work of fishing began in earnest. We needed several thousands to carry us through until spring. The fish in this lake are not very good, and we are making them better by making them less. As we pick the bones of the poor fish we solve the problem by mentally determining to help rid



this lake of its surplus life. Two hundred thousand whitefish out of this little body of fresh water will give the balance opportunity to live and thrive. This is why we have gone without clothes and furniture, even to a cooking stove, in order to invest in twine and net material, all of which is exceedingly costly. We have introduced these amongst the Indians, and quite a number who in all their previous history never owned or used a net are now the happy possessors of a narrow fifteen or twenty fathom one. To these men this is a wonderful advance in civilization and permanent life; to us it is all this and more, for it is so much toward the carrying out of our method of making the fish in this particular lake fitter food for man and beast.

We had already found that the first few weeks of winter are the best time for catching fish, and now with long pole and forked stick and cod lines we pass our nets under the ice, and every morning overhaul them and freeze the fish, and carry them up to the storehouse, and thus prepare for home and journey and general work, and also for the inevitable wanderer, who will doubtless, as in the past, come to us singly and in droves. And, as ever, if we would reach the heart and soul we must, as did the Master, do this through the stomach; and,

as we know full well by this time, even a poor fish is better than an empty stomach. Thus the early morn of the twenty-fifth of November found us on our knees on the ice of this beautiful highland lake, literally jerking the fish from the net with our teeth and swinging them out upon the ice beside us with a toss of the neck, when in looking out upon the lake I discerned an object which it seemed to me must have come upon the scene since the previous evening. After glancing at it a few times, I pointed it out to an Indian, who also was overhauling his net. He laughingly replied, "Oh, it is only the ice-crack shining up in that place," and we went on with our work ; but ever and anon I looked at the object and determined to investigate it later.

This being our little daughter's birthday, we had decided upon a humble feast, and as there were twelve or fifteen lodges of our people with us, all were invited. But as this would not take place until afternoon, I went on as usual and put my fish away and washed my nets, and then, being at leisure, quietly took my gun and skates and went down to the lake. The snow was beaten hard to the ice in ridges or drifts, and in between these there was good skating. With my skates firmly tied on, I started to reconnoitre the object far out on the ice. When the Indians saw me, some of their



best runners came in pursuit. They reasoned, "John has a far-seeing glass; he has already made that spot out, and it is worth a run; let us race him for it." The fact was, I had no glass, but was of that make that I must find out if possible what this object was, and this was the spur of my action that morning and many mornings since then. Soon the whole camp was astir, and soon they saw that the fleetest men were not in it, for even on the snow I ran about as fast as they could, and when in the windings of the ice doubled and quadrupled on them, all the time with my eye keenly on the speck which had aroused my curiosity, and which was now quickly growing larger. Presently, as the big animal rose to its feet, I saw this was a full-grown cow moose. Ah, thought I, this is a royal birthday present for little Ruth. Now began the chase and fun in real earnest, and still my skates gave me a great advantage, for while my game made fast time on the snow-clad spots, it slipped and sometimes almost fell on the places where I was making the greatest speed. Verily it was a most unfair race, as usually are indeed such between man and the lower order of animals, for this was but a sample of all hunting. In a very short time I was upon the big moose, and suddenly she turned to strike me, but I fired right into her breast, straight for the heart, and



"She turned to strike me, but I fired right into her breast." (Page 22.)



down upon the ice fell my quarry. By the time I had bled the moose and got nicely to work skinning it, my Indian friends came up smilingly congratulating me on my good fortune and speed. I gave my good old skates—a pair I had brought into the country in 1860—all the credit, and invited them to share the meat, just as any one of these fellows would have done to me if I had come upon his kill. Our *menu* that day included moose-nose and brisket and meat, all of which was delightfully opportune, and I was truly thankful. It was a great day to those simple people; such a feast some of them had never seen, much less partaken of. The King of England may feed once in a lifetime a host of his poor subjects, but we at that time were really doing more in feeding half a hundred; and the appreciation was great. Enduring bonds of friendship and trust were made that day between us and those wild roving men and women.

A strange little company that was to thus meet and for the little while forget all the alien idea, and in common give themselves to enjoyment and goodly cheer; a motley crew, of strange history and tradition, murderers and poisoners and horse-thieves, and conjurers and medicine-men, and gamblers and warriors, and skilful hunters, etc. Many a foul crime, many a glorious deed, is written in the faces of those who linger at our feast to-day. Yonder sits

old Paul. Even now the avenger is on the lookout for him, and his kin and his arms are ever at hand, and his eye ever alert to guard his life and home. He and his brother each killed his man over a gambling quarrel. Now both are repentant, and Paul is, as I verily believe, a converted soul, and one of our staunch Christians; but the recent past hangs over him all the same. God is more ready to forgive than man.

Yonder is Simon, who also is, as we watch him, gripping his gun, and feeling for his knife, and listening and looking doorwards. He also has recently murdered two men, both half-breeds, and knows full well that if any of their friends come upon him unawares his life and perhaps that of his party will make atonement for the crime. He, too, is sorry, but still rankling with the insults that he claims these men gave him and his people. There is the look of murder in his very attitude as we behold him as our guest.

Here is a noted horse-thief. At the time of which I write this was a glory, a meritorious act, with most of the native population of the West. There is no blush on his brow; the more horses he has stolen the greater man is he, and the more renown and favor he has in camp with both sexes.

On the other hand are Samson, and John, and



William, all noble specimens of manhood, valiant in war, heroic for peace, and experts in animal lore and hunting life. Grizzlies and moose, mountain and elk, cariboo and wolverine, all manner of small game, and black and cinnamon bear, have fallen to their scouting skill and unerring marksmanship. Now in the prime and full vigor of their mature manhood, these noble fellows are our welcome guests, and in all confidence we depend upon them under God to keep the peace at our festive board. Some good folk, as also some merely inquisitive people, have often said to us, "How did you win the confidence and faith of these native tribes?" To-day's experience is in part the answer. We companioned with them in sorrow and in joy, in fasting and in feasting, in peace and in war; were in all things like them, without in any sense compromising either principle or manliness. We were nomads or permanents, as our work needed. We hunted and trapped and fished, and engaged in all manner of athletics, foot races, horse races, anything for real fun and common brotherhood. Thus we found out men, and these in turn saw us and read us as a book, until they knew that on every page of our life there was written friendship and the true desire to help them. More than this, they saw we believed in them, and at last they grew to believe most heartily in us.

## CHAPTER II.

Winter sets in—A visit to Edmonton—The “Pondura antelope”—I secure a superb train of dogs—A run to Victoria—A jolly company—Representative Indian types—Aristocrats of the plains—Watch-night service—An accident—Home again.

THE winter of 1868-9 came slowly, and in the northern and western part of the country was more or less open. There was not sufficient snow to enable us to use sleighs to go out after buffalo, nor yet did we dare to start with carts. Moreover, the herds kept far out on the plains, or as much so as the weather permitted them to do. It is still very hard for the inexperienced to understand that the colder the weather and harder the winter, farther into the north did the great herds feed; but all through the sixties and seventies this was my knowledge of them. With short trips to Indian camps, furnishing firewood for our home, looking after nets and making sleighs, the short days of early winter passed rapidly. Most of our reading was done by the dim tallow dip or chimney fire; our literature was limited, and of the ancient type; one thousand miles to the nearest post gave us very little



trouble with our mail. As Christmas drew on the last of the Indians had gone, scattering in many directions into the woods and mountains. The buffalo were too far away for any to think of them as a food supply, and the people had grown tired of our fish diet. We were alone, so we concluded to make for Edmonton for the holidays. We were longing for a change, for communion with kin and mother tongue, and perhaps we were also influenced by a desire for change of food. I confess that sometimes in my life this latter has influenced me considerably. As there was very little snow, and as my dogs had died the previous spring and summer of a virulent distemper, which had raged among the wolves and dogs in our vicinity, we travelled with horses. Our friends at Edmonton welcomed us with open arms, and we went into the fun and festivity of the season heartily.

I think it was at this time, essaying to preach in English at the urgent request of the resident pastor, Rev. Peter Campbell, that I broke down. I had been using Cree for years, but now when I attempted to speak in my own tongue I was at a loss, so much so that I was obliged to sit down. My friend the pastor came to the rescue, and I know that most of the audience, being gentlemen from the outlying Hudson's Bay posts, thoroughly sympathized with me. It was here

also that again I met the "Pondura antelope," Mr. Henry Hardisty, who had the conceit to challenge some of us to a foot-race. He was much surprised when, running against his own brother, Mr. Richard Hardisty, and my brother David and myself, he found that the "Pondura antelope" was distanced by every one of us. He acknowledged "that the western slope of the Rockies was nowhere with the eastern in speed." Possibly this will always be the case, as there is something in climate and topography, and certainly we have plenty of space for great running on this side. At any rate, the "Pondura antelope" said no more about himself on that score. It was glorious to mingle with the joyous crowd for a day or two, and the memory of the visit to old Edmonton in 1868 is still a fresh and fragrant spot in my life.

It was at this time that I, being on the lookout for a good train of dogs, found them. A celebrated dog breeder and trainer, Mr. McGilvery, had brought them in from Slave Lake and given them to his brother-in-law, resident at Fort Edmonton. Owing to the absence of snow, these dogs were not known; at any rate this would be their first working winter. Finding that this train was for sale, I said to the owner, "Will you let me try your dogs?" and he complied by harnessing them up. I went down on

the ice of the river and gave them a spin, and soon saw that if I could make the trade these dogs would be a treasure. Having tried them, the next thing was to buy them. I found that the owner wanted a good large mare of reasonable age, with last spring's foal by her side, one cart and harness, one sack of flour and an order on the Hudson's Bay Company for two pounds sterling—say, as prices went at the time, mare, seventy-five dollars; foal, fifteen; cart, fifteen; harness, five dollars; flour, twenty-five dollars; sterling order, ten dollars—totalling one hundred and twenty-five dollars. Well, this was a good price, but my credit was also good. I bought the dogs, and as some of us determined to go on down to Victoria for the New Year, I very soon demonstrated to all who travelled with me that I had the gem train of the Saskatchewan country, which to one of my temperament and style of travel was a benediction. Four magnificent brutes they were, a dark brown, a jet black, and two white with tan spots. How my heart delighted in those dogs! If anyone, even the owner, had known them before I got them, their price would have doubled, and I often said while using this train that I, though a poor man, would give all I paid for the outfit for the leader alone. Even as I write, though over thirty years have come and gone, I can see his fine

hazel eyes looking into mine, and his whole expression saying, "We are more than a match for the best of them, aren't we?" and I would pat his big intelligent head and answer, "Yes, my lad, we can, with the blessing of heaven, show the whole crowd of winter travellers the way if they will only keep near enough to discern our tracks." My dogs' names were Cæsar, Whiskey, Jumper and Cabrea, and a right noble quartette they were in character, if not in name.

It was a lively, jovial crowd that started down the Saskatchewan in time to catch the New Year at Victoria. As there was only two or three inches of snow we had to take the ice for it. There may have been a dozen trains in all, some Victoria people returning home and some Hudson's Bay officers and myself visiting. Right merrily we raced around the points, and with swinging trot and sometimes a keen gallop our dogs rang their bells. For the time being we forgot isolation and loneliness, and the distant mission and post, and went in for a good healthy frolic. My new dogs without any effort would draw away from the best trains in the party. I confess I was tremendously proud of my "find," for thus they were termed by my almost envious friends. The "Pondura antelope" was with us, trying his hand for the first time in dog-running. The weather was splendid,

cold, crisp and clear, and the atmosphere surcharged with ozone, and we were living plainly enough to be healthy and full of spirits of the right kind. Pemmican and dried meat, with a taste of flour and water in the shape of little round cakes, served as our fare; plain enough, but partaken of with such appetites and relish as a king might well envy. Scotland, Ontario and the North-West were all represented in our camp. The blood of strong and adventurous people was in our veins and hearts, and one may be sure our camp-fire was no funeral procession. Ready joke and ringing laugh and quick repartee and a full flood-tide of real good nature, and thus we journeyed in right good time to Victoria, and thus with glad cheer our friends of mission and fort met us and to their hearts and homes bade us welcome.

Victoria at this time had a fine settlement of English half-breeds. These people were easily influenced either way, and now under father's wise hand were gladly on the right side in both civilization and Christianity. They were a distinct type of humanity—a speculative, adventurous, roving white race of men for fathers, and nomadic, homeless, natural people for mothers. Here was a new experiment in the race problem—a strong, weak people—a paradox in humanity. And as all men have needed a



period of intense tuition and constant oversight in all matters, even to the maintenance of domestic and commercial habits and instruction in life, as well as a multiplication of law in moral and spiritual experience, so these men wanted a leader or teacher, or failing this they went to the wall before the many forces a man has to contend with. Just now, in the order of Providence, the missionary is the leader in all things, and as these are the holidays he is at the head of these gatherings, whether for frolic, or fun, or for spiritual benefit.

Coming and going, and now for the New Year, there were represented several distinct classes of Indian peoples. First there was the real native of the vicinity, the semi-Wood and Plain Cree, the man who could make his way either in the forest or plain; a moose and fur hunter, a dweller alone with family or with the multitude, generally a plucky character whom isolation made self-helpful. Then there were the true woodmen, who almost shunned the plains, whose delight was to travel alone or in small parties, and whose hunting was still-craft. Wonderful knowledge of animal movement and habit was theirs by long heredity and by steady practice. Brave and docile, believing and humble, these were the easiest converts to Christianity, and also were the most easily handled by



the great trading company which had exploited their country for generations. Then there were the Plain Crees. Speaking the pure mother tongue, while the others were more or less dialectical, these at times rose into the classic language, doubtless of the long past, when these strange men must have had a civilization, and possibly a literature, which have entirely disappeared. These Plain men were the aristocrats of the nation; they looked with disdain and contempt upon the Wood Indians. They lived in large camps and flocked together, and while they were constantly at war, were not nearly as brave as the Wood men they so despised. It was amusing to watch one of these lordly fellows visit either a mission-house or a Hudson's Bay post. He had the air of conferring a great favor. He patronized even more than the new graduate or the new curate. His self-consciousness projected in every direction. If he mentioned his fellowmen, it was by way of parenthesis and *en passant*, "merely a trifle, you know." The broad plains, the big herds, the sublime ignorance had developed the wrong way with this man, and the result was a conceited prig. Slow to learn, he had much to unlearn; and it takes time to do the latter. Unburdening the load of centuries of misconception is a great work, but it must be under-

gone by all people before the lessons of the new life can germinate and take root.

New Year's came in with a crowded watch-night service. After a delightful meeting, on bended knee and in solemn silence, we watched the last minutes of the old year pass and the first ones of the new year come in. Then there were warm hand-shakings and congratulations. The day was spent in a general feast, followed by out-door sports, football, foot-races, and tugs-of-war, dog-train races, etc. The "Pondura antelope" was steadily awaking to the agility and strength of the eastern slope. We had come from Edmonton in quick time, so he thought. By the river it was at least one hundred miles, on hard ice, difficult to run continuously upon. He offered to bet two hundred dollars that no man could go on foot this distance in twenty hours. I thought for a moment and then told him that I did not bet, but if he would give me two hundred dollars for the church I wanted to build at Pigeon Lake, I would do it. This backed him down and out of the running business for the time.

The second day of January, 1869, found us a scattering crowd. "To your tents, oh, Israel," was the necessary cry of the time. The settlement had no such supply of food as would warrant a long stay of many visitors. No one

recognized this more than the visitors themselves. Indians and half-breeds and ourselves one after the other departed for our widely separated homes, and by evening we were sundered far. Our party camped in a spruce grove on a small bench, under the shadow of the high bank of the Saskatchewan. Early the next day we reached Edmonton. One of my sisters, Georgina, accompanied us that far, and had a wild experience riding after my new dogs, one which almost resulted seriously; for as we swung up the hill at the fort, so fast was the step and so quick the turn, that my carryall upset and threw her out, and her head striking a boulder she was for a time unconscious. My heart was in my throat as I put her back into the sled and hurried up to the fort. Fortunately the hurt was but temporary, however. She advised her friends after this to be careful how they went driving behind John's dogs. Indeed, there was not snow sufficient for such work, and I did not risk my wife and children on the dog sleigh in returning to Pigeon Lake, but let my dogs run light beside the sober gait of the horses we had brought in with us. There had not come any more snow, and the sleighing was extremely poor. However, we were back at the lake and glad to be home again, but greatly refreshed

with our short sojourn on the outside of our little world.

Our oldest little girl, Flora, whom we had left with her grandparents at Victoria in September, I brought up with me, and she was now with us, and though scarcely three years old, was a most remarkable example of language learning, for in three months she had learned to speak English. Her vocabulary was quite extensive, and her pronunciation remarkably correct. Formerly it was all Cree with our little daughter; now it was all English, and she quite amused her mother and the Indians around us by her insistence in using this new language at all times.

We found our people and home all right, and at once fell into the routine of travel and work for the winter. When we had a congregation, either few or many, we lectured and preached as best we could, and around the camp-fire did some of our most effectual work; and God blessed us in helping men and women to a higher plane of life. Getting out timber and lumber, gathering firewood, hauling hay, keeping the pot boiling, and our time was fully taken up. Even if we had a study and books, there would have been precious little time for them. But as we see things now, our study was a big room wherein was all manner of strange life and mysterious problem,

and in the working out of the questions before us at the time God was teaching in His own way ; at any rate He was giving us a grip of this wonderful country, and also of the confidence of the people dwelling in it. We were aliens no more in this commonwealth.





## CHAPTER III.

A trip to Rocky Mountain Fort—A tenderfoot's bewilderment—"The hills of God"—Tact of the Hudson's Bay Company—A wolverine's cunning.

DURING February some snow fell and winter travel began. The two Hardistys, Philip Tait and a couple of other men came along on their way to the Rocky Mountain Fort, and as this was a part of my mission I took the opportunity of going with them there. It was a great thing to have such company. Ours was the first party this winter, and we had to break the way through about eight inches of snow. The winter road led across portage and plain and lake, and through the bush as straight as possible, and was entirely distinct from that used in summer. Our first run was the length of Pigeon Lake and across country to the junction of Pigeon Creek with Battle River. We crossed the latter and then proceeded over the country to the Blind River, and then across the Medicine Lodge, and so on into the foothills and down into the valley of the Saskatchewan, where the fort stood on the northern bank of the river. The distance from



Pigeon Lake is about one hundred and fifty miles, and we made it easily in three days.

My new leader showed wonderful instinct in keeping a trail which had not been used since the previous winter. Over a hill, down a slope, out on to a lake, and straight across, striking with unerring judgment for where the road would leave the lake. To us, old trailers as we were, this dog was a marvel, and as I easily distanced the party, my dogs and self made the road the whole way.

Our second day out, as evening drew on, I held up not far beyond a clump of dry timber, which I thought suitable for camp, and waited for the advance members of our party to come up. Richard Hardisty and Philip Tait were the first to arrive, and as they voted for camping, we retraced our road a few rods, turned into a thicket and went on to the lee side of the clump of timber. When all had come up but the western slope man, we laid a plot, suggested by his brother, to cover our side track, and see what this tenderfoot would do when he discovered the end of the road. Purposely we left our dogs in the harness, and while making camp and carrying wood we also listened intently for the approach of our friend. By and by we heard his coming, and his style of dog-driving was very amusing. Instead of the quick, vigorous,

crisp "Marse," this was his way: "Hello, I, say; go on, now." "See here, don't you know we are far behind?" Then aloud to himself, but which came to us in the calm of the evening, "I wonder if those fellows are never going to camp? This is becoming monotonous; it is hours since I saw the last of them." Again, to his team, "Get up, there, you dogs." "Come, now, move up," and so on, while they wondered and took a slower gait, and doubtless awaited further development, for to their dog minds this was an entirely new specimen of the *genus homo*. But in the meantime it was great fun for us, and what would he do if the old dogs he drove did not discover our side track? Presently, with suppressed laughter we saw them go forging past, with our "antelope" standing on the end of the sled, and a most woe-begotten look on his face as he saw stretching away across the valley a plain in which there was no prospect of a camp for miles.

"Well, well, did you ever see such lunatics; they would rather run and rough it than stop at home. Catch me ever coming on such a trip as this for fun. Get up, there, you old lazy bones, I say; we will never reach camp at this rate; I say, hustle, now!" But soon the old dog, whose head was becoming muddled by all this strange discourse he and his companions

had listened to for the last day or two, was now at his wits' end, for here was the end of the road—unbroken snow all around, nor sight nor sound of human being. Even the dog paused and thought, and how much more did the hapless driver, for, having recovered his balance, which he almost lost as the dog-sled suddenly came to a stand, he was altogether upset by this fact that had disturbed his dog and was now dawning upon his own mind—here was the end of the road! He was sure of it. At first he ran on a few steps, as if he thought we had jumped over a piece of the trail. Then he peered into the distance, as if we had taken wings and were now sailing over the earth, or had already alighted on some distant point. Then he stood and scratched his head, which I have noted is a sure sign either of too much life or of dense bewilderment. This time it was the latter, and no wonder, for here was a man who had never been anywhere alone, always dependent on a guide, now suddenly brought to a standstill, guiding himself in midwinter in a northern clime, with party and provisions all gone, trail gone, nothing but snow, wilderness, and isolation. The man's attitude and expression were almost those of despair. He was speechless, and thinking this was enough for the present, I shouted, "Hello, Henry, are you going on to-night?" As if an

angel had come to him with joyous message, his face brightened with great satisfaction, and I have no doubt his thought was, "Thank God," but from his lips came, "John, I really thought I was lost," and turning his dogs very soon the "Pondura antelope" was in camp with us, and in a little while was joining with our party in laughing at himself as each one mimicked his style of dog-driving and then struck an attitude as best he could representing our friend at the end of the trail.

On to the mountains, and in the early morn those glorious hills of God were before us. This was my third sight of them. It is my ninth year of constant travel in the North-West, and but seldom have I come this way. In our party to-day is one who is a native and has spent long years in this Saskatchewan country, and yet this is his first glimpse of the mountains; I refer to Mr. Tait. Like myself, he is in raptures over them. And as from every new hilltop we catch fresh glimpses, with their ever-changing moods and panoramic variety for us to look upon and delight in, the miles are gone quickly and we reach the Mountain House. This since my last visit had been thoroughly rebuilt, and was now a large place in regular fort style, with stockades, bastions and citadel. Captain Hackland was in charge, and we were welcomed with

the usual cheer of the Hudson's Bay post. On Sunday at service there were many nationalities present, English, Scotch, French, mixed bloods, Cree, Stoney, Blackfoot, Protestant, Roman Catholic and pagan, and I did my best, with the help of the Lord, as I spoke in Cree, which was practically the universal medium of the time. We held two services, and visited the people in their homes in the fort and in the camps outside of it. This place had been rebuilt to draw off the Blackfeet people from conflict with the Crees. Making Edmonton the common trading-post served to cultivate conflict, and it was, always the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company to stop this as much as possible. Just now the frequenters of this place are Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegans, Sarcees and Stoneys. Any Crees coming here are employed, or are the wives of employees, or are on the warpath bent, and so far as the Company is concerned are discountenanced as much as possible; but as these roving bands of Cree warriors represent so many communities with which the Hudson's Bay Company has trading interests, they have to be handled with great tact. Anything rash would frustrate the object in view and imperil lives all down the big Saskatchewan.

Early Monday morning we were away again. In the meantime more snow had fallen and



drifts were now in order, but my noble dogs made light of all obstacles, and now my leader knew the trail, so on we went at a rapid step homeward. A vigorous, lively, hearty party was ours. Storm and deeper snow but cheered us up. An hour before daylight and noon and night the camps were scenes of healthy fun and, at times, of noisy argument. The reader must not think this was light work, to roll out at two in the morning and hustle yourself and dogs into harness for the day; and again, about five a.m., to make fire after three hours' heavy run, chop and carry wood, cut brush and dig snow to be comfortable for forty or fifty minutes, and repeat this at 11.30 or 12 o'clock; to hurry your best all the afternoon until dark is near, and then work for an hour as hard as a beaver in cutting firewood and carrying the same to camp; to gather a huge pile for the six or eight hours you will spend here, cut brush or willows, or dig up swamp hay to floor your camp with after you have cleaned away the snow as much as possible from the breast of Mother Earth, all the while keeping your feet and legs as dry as you can from the melting snow near your fire, remembering that your health is not to be played with. Careless habits in this latter respect have killed off many a pioneer when but starting into his prime. The Indian is not lazy when on



either hunting or war expeditions out is careful of his camp and comfort therein. I have often noted this as lacking in white men. When on the trip "anything will do" is on their lips and manifests itself in their conduct. Therefore I have seen a white man, coming out of a luxurious home and out of many generations of upward movement, drop in a few months to being the dirtiest, laziest creature in camp. Such men are objects of curiosity and disgust to the natives. No, to be a real pioneer, adventurer and traveller, winter and summer, entails hard work and plenty of it. Brain and lung and muscle and good optimistic pluck, these are always at a premium. This party I am with now is full of generations of such life, and it is a pleasure indeed to dwell in camp and on the road with such men.

On our way up we cached a big bag of fish for our dogs. We thought we had been careful against the wiles and cunning of our everlasting enemy the wolverine, *alias* "carcajou," *alias* the "kig-wuh-hoh-gas," *alias* the "now-wa-yuh-ma-shees," etc.; as my reader will note, this notorious criminal against all pioneer mankind has many names. We had hung our bag of fish at the end of a long pole, which in turn we rested in the limb of a tall tree, the bag hanging from the end of the pole away out from the tree—both pole and tree made as smooth as possible

with our axes—and thus we felt quite secure. However, as I approached the spot, which I did a long way in advance of my friends, I saw tracks in the fresh snow, and began to fear for our dogs and their fish. Coming nearer, I saw Mr. Wolverine with a fish in his mouth making for the bush. I had caught him in the act; what need for further testimony? Stopping my dogs at the camp, I ran after the rascal and forced him so much in the race that he dropped the fish. Running on a short distance I found a pile of snow which he had scratched up, and under this lay a number of our fish. These I carried back to camp, and proceeded to investigate our cache. I found that the scamp had managed to climb the tree, and then had jumped at the bag, and at last succeeded in cutting a hole in the bottom of it, out of which by continuous shaking the fish had dropped to the ground. I could imagine the industrious fellow climbing the tree repeatedly (of which the trunk bore evidence) in order, in the first place, to make the hole; then the pluck of the high jump to the ground so many times, for the bag was a very strong one and it must have taken considerable biting and scratching on the fly to have made the rent; and then afterwards the shaking process, as fish after fish dropped and the others would block the hole. Then I came upon the

scene. The poor fellow had worked so intently that he had taken time to eat only a few, as he in turn evidently intended to cache just as we had done. Why, by the time I had secured the fish and investigated the manner of theft, if one could call it such, and cleaned the snow out of our camp, and made a fire and put down fresh brush, I was heartily in sympathy with the wolverine and ready to protect him from our party when they came up. Some expressed indignation, but I said, "No, gentlemen, we must make our caches better; it is our brain against his; let us have fair play." However, we and our dogs were glad that after all most of the fish remained to us.

On back to Pigeon Lake, through deepening snow, which, however, made very little difference to my fliers. We lunched within twenty miles of the Mission, and when I took the ice at the end of the lake, twelve miles from home, I could faintly hear my comrades coming, and when I was out in the middle of the lake they began to show up on the shore. My, my, what a race those dogs gave me across that lake in the loose snow, as I sat on a small box I had lashed in the wrapper of my toboggan, the snow flying on all sides. It was a regular whirlwind of speed and rush, and when we climbed the bank before our own door, and I had rubbed the

frosted snow from my face and looked across the ice, my companions were as specks in the distance. Our little company from house and lodge had been watching the run and were right proud of our dogs. Pigeon Lake, a city of two shacks and some leather lodges, could "clean out" the Saskatchewan in a dog race. All of which every one of my companions loudly affirmed when at last they came up straggling one after the other, for all had done their best.

As I wanted to confer with my Chairman as to a big gathering for the coming summer on the plains, I took the chance of company on to Edmonton and Victoria, and right glad father and mother and sisters were to see us. The people, as a whole, too, always gave me a hearty welcome, for, as they said, was I not one of themselves in language and western experience? I have so often found this with native people, that to be as good as themselves in their craft, or even sometimes a little better, is the short way to their respect and very often to their hearts.

## CHAPTER IV.

A big hunt planned—Tragic death of Maskepetoon—District meeting at Victoria—Jacob Bigstone—Rev. Wm. Lacombe—Jacob's skill in tracking—A strong temptation—Consecrated to the ministry—Wars and rumors of war.

OUR programme for the summer of 1869 was a big gathering of hunters on the plains. Mr. Steinhauer was to come with all his people, and also the Lac la Biche half-breeds and Indians. Father and the Hudson's Bay Company officers from Victoria were to be there, with the whole settlement, and the big Wood Cree camp, of which Maskepetoon was head chief; and I was to bring as many Crees and Mountain and Wood Stoney as I could muster. The object was protection and the cultivating by lecture and sermon and personal intercourse of education and loyalty and Christianity. This was the first effort of the kind. The Rev. Mr. Campbell, of Edmonton, was to join us, and any teachers who were in the Mission employ were to come along. To effect this any amount of prejudices and petty jealousies had to be overcome. Maskepetoon went into it heartily, but others did not favor



the scheme, and all manner of obstruction was laid; but as we had until the last of May to arrange, we were hopeful. This primarily with other minor matters had brought me to Victoria, whence, having counselled with my Chairman, I returned home *via* Edmonton.

In March I was kept busy at work on the Mission with Indians coming and going all the time, all concerned and excited over the contemplated gathering of the coming summer. About the end of the month, or early in April, there came the dire news of the killing of Maskepetoon and his sons by the Blackfeet. This was a sad blow to our Mission, as the grand old man had always been favorable to Christianity, and was a staunch friend of the white man. When the details of his tragic death came to us I never felt more like going on the warpath myself, and was not surprised when I knew that many a Cree had schemes for revenge planned for the spring and summer. It turned out that the Crees and Blackfeet were in proximity, having been forced there by the movements of the buffalo, and the Blackfeet made proposals of peace, which Maskepetoon answered favorably, and himself and his son with a small party set out to arrange and ratify the compact. As he approached the camp of the Blackfeet, the latter came out to meet him with loud acclaim, and



seemed very friendly, and the whole crowd of both sides sat down to quietly converse, and, as far as Maskepetoon was concerned, to smoke the pipe of peace. But while this function was going on, at a signal given by one of the Blackfeet, the massacre of the old chief and his people began, and very soon all were killed by this consummate treachery. Not satisfied with this, the Blackfeet dismembered and severed the old hero's body, limb from limb, and dragged these at their horses' tails into their camp. My old friend had been a great warrior, but for many years had worked hard in the interest of peace, and had won an enviable reputation amongst all the tribes and camps, so that many of the enemy highly respected him. I have no doubt it was envy and jealousy in the minds of ambitious and base men that led to the foul murder of our true friend.

There was mourning in many a camp on the Saskatchewan, and among the pagan peoples much weeping and wailing because good old Maskepetoon was no more. Both father and mother sorrowed for him as a dear friend, and I not only felt sorry, but almost thirsted for revenge. It was thought that this most sad and tragic misfortune would break up our contemplated gathering, but as the spring opened up we went on with our arrangements for it.

The District Meeting for this year was held at Victoria early in April. There were to attend it as ordained men the Rev. George McDougall, the Rev. H. B. Steinhauer, and the Rev. Peter Campbell, while I went as a probationer; a small gathering, but covering an immense territory. I took with me Jacob Bigstone, a semi-Mountain and Wood Stoney, and a genuine type of real manhood, a splendid-looking fellow, a great hunter, and a swift runner. Many a bull moose and elk had my friend run down. He was noted for his speed and endurance amongst his own people, who were almost to a man speedy on foot and had great staying powers. The Wood Stoneys, even down to the little children, were wonderful pedestrians, for they had but few horses. Jacob and his band had plenty of horses, but hunting as they did in the mountains and woods kept up limb and lung ability. Jacob had never been as far east as Edmonton. To him it was a great place, and when we reached Victoria, now quite a settlement, he thought he was in a metropolis. I had become attached to Jacob; he was not much older than myself, and we had a good deal in common. It was a pleasure to try and educate this man along the line of Christian civilization, and to watch his mind expand and his whole nature respond to teaching and kindness.

Between Edmonton and Victoria we came upon two priests, also going eastward, one of whom was Rev. Mr. Lacombe, one of the pioneers of this country. They had one cart and one horse, and now this horse was lamed so that he could not travel. All I could do was to let them have my saddle-horse and foot it myself, which I did, and we pushed on, leaving the priests with their load to follow more slowly.

After an early lunch I left Jacob to bring on the cart, and set out on foot for Victoria. I had about thirty-five miles to run, but there had been thawing and freezing, and now the road was icy in spots and as hard as flint. Before I had gone half way my moccasins gave out, then my duffles (we had no socks in those days), and now I was down to "hard pan," so to speak—down to the soles of my feet—and it was either sit and wait for Jacob or go on and grin and bear it. I took the latter course, and by the time I reached Victoria had several big blisters on each foot, which were exceedingly painful and caused me to walk circumspectly for several days after. I reached Victoria about two p.m., Jacob came along late in the evening, and our friends, the Catholic priests, arrived the next afternoon, very grateful for the loan of my horse.

It was while at Victoria this time that Jacob evidenced what struck me as wonderful skill in

tracking. We kept our horses on what was known as "the flat" above the Mission, and it was Jacob's duty to look after them. The day after the District Meeting I said to Jacob, "Are all our horses there?" (I had left some at Victoria the fall before, and now we had seven in number.) There was a brown mare I was afraid might try to get away, and I asked him particularly about her. "She is there, I just now changed her hobbles," was his direct answer. About a couple of hours after this father and I rode to a settlement some ten miles north, and when some three or four miles out I saw a number of horses in a swamp on one side of the road, and to my great surprise here was the identical brown mare. This somewhat staggered me, but I still held to my faith in Jacob; so, merely taking stock of the other horses the mare was with, I said to myself, "I will pick her up as we come back." To my astonishment, as we came back, here were the same horses, all but the brown mare; but as it was now evening we rode home. After a while I asked Jacob about our horses, and his answer somewhat surprised me when he said, "They are all on the flat; I saw them since the sun went down." "Is the brown mare there?" I asked. "Yes, she is," he unhesitatingly answered. "Was she there all day?" was my

next question. Then Jacob smiled and told me that soon after we left he went to look after our horses and found that the brown mare had left the others, so he went to hunt her up, and found her just where I had seen her, between three and four miles out north in a swamp with some strange horses. I let him describe to me the spot and the country intervening, and the color and size and sex of the animals the mare was with; and knowing that the whole region was tracked up, and that the road was constantly in use both to and fro, and furthermore being somewhat expert at such business myself, I said, "This man is at the top in such matters." Brain and eye and instinct all strong and forceful, what scouts such men make! Jacob and his whole clan would be invaluable as allies and exceedingly dangerous as enemies.

It was also at Victoria at this time that one of the crises of my life took place. On the way down, when at Edmonton, the Chief Factor, Wm. Christie, Esq., in charge of the Saskatchewan district, took me up to his private office and spoke to me in this wise: "John, the Methodist Church does not want you; you have been serving them for years, and as yet there is no recognition of you even as probationer. I have carefully followed the report of last Conference, and your case was not considered. Now, as it



is clear that they do not want you, I have to say that we do want you. I will put you in charge of the Mountain Fort, I will give you a chief clerk's salary, and you shall be found in every particular. We want your business ability also, and, better, we want your tact in dealing with the Indians. We have been watching this when you did not think we were doing so, and now I want you to take my offer into serious consideration. You are going to the District Meeting, and you can tell your father, for as yet the Church has no hold on you."

Of course I was altogether taken by surprise, and, as was natural, was very much flattered by what Mr. Christie had said. I knew that up to this time my case was very much in the balance so far as any action by our Church authorities was concerned. I had been recommended by a District Meeting of 1864, and this was after four years of constant mission work, and it was now the spring of 1869 and still my case hung. The Chief Factor knew all this very well, and he also knew my work for nine years, but especially for the last seven on the Saskatchewan. He had previously offered me the charge of the Hudson's Bay post at Victoria, which I had declined in respect to my father's wishes, and now this opening from the worldly standpoint was good and promising. Also I saw that I



could do a great deal of true missionary work as officer of the Hudson's Bay Company, and thus the whole question came to me with a sore temptation to accept the Chief Factor's proposition. Then my own brother-in-law, Richard Hardisty, chief trader, came to me and asked if Mr. Christie had made me an offer, and when I answered, "Yes," he said, "You will take it; you must take it, John," and as he was older than myself, and a man I very much respected, I was sorely beset. Thus perplexed in mind, I went down to the District Meeting. When this was opened, and my opportunity came, I asked for the acceptance of my resignation, but this was vigorously opposed by Mr. Campbell and Mr. Steinhauer. Father kept silent, but to me his looks spoke volumes. The brethren spent all the morning in a prayer-meeting, then adjourned, and I was face to face with the problem of my life. So it seemed to me at the time, and for some hours I wrestled with it, until finally I told the good Lord that I was done and would fully give myself to what I thought I was called to. This was my act of consecration, and I then and there entered into the experience of such a condition. When I told the brethren of my determination they sang the doxology, and I began to feel that these men, at any rate, believed in me and in my ability to work in this field for God and country.

And now our District Meeting, having fully determined to muster the clans for the unique gathering during the coming summer, and Jacob having seen and "done" to his satisfaction the huge metropolis of Victoria, and as now I had ceased from fighting destiny, we left for our still more western home. A young lad from Toronto, Skinner by name, whom father had brought out the previous autumn, accompanied us. This boy had had full swing in the city, and was naturally precocious and clever, but was now being put through a new school. I was glad to have him with us; so was Jacob, for he livened up our camp and was very amusing with his broken Cree, which by the way he was mending rapidly. Father had said, "Take the boy with you, John, and do what you can with him."

Westward we rolled with our cart and loose horses, as fast as the roads and the rivers, now breaking up, would let us. The third evening found us within thirty or more miles from Edmonton. I said to Jacob, "I want to go on to-night, and you can come in in the morning," to which proposition he readily assented. Then young Skinner pled to be allowed to go with me, but as he had no saddle I objected. Then he offered to ride in bareback, and finally we put a robe on a pony and let the boy come along. My gait was a quick steady gallop, and for the

first five or six miles Skinner was all animation. He plied me with questions, and told me about his life in Toronto, but soon there came a change, and I had to say, "Come on, Skinner," and had repeatedly to do this. Finally the boy began to cry, and when I asked him why, he said he was tired and sore. I reminded that this was what I had feared for him. "But now," I said, "we are pretty nearly half way to Edmonton, and I am not going to turn back with you nor yet let you go alone ; you must just grin and bear it, old fellow," and I brought his pony up beside mine and sent both horses into a sharp gallop, which by and by had the effect of making my Toronto lad forget his pain and weariness, and thus before the gates were closed we were in the walls of old Edmonton.

Before I slept that night I had told the Chief Factor of my decision, and while to my face he said I was foolish, yet I knew in his heart he respected me the more. My brother-in-law was quite indignant, and roundly scolded me. Later on he also came around and said no doubt the Lord had given me a training for a special work. I in the meantime was at rest as never before, and thanked God and took courage and slept.

Next day, Jacob arriving, we crossed the Saskatchewan and went on to Pigeon Lake. From there on Indian camps kept us busy. War parties

and thieves were in the field worse than ever; there seemed to be nothing but wars and rumors thereof in the air. Already, while the spring was yet young, Maskepetoon's murder was being avenged and many scalps were taken. We had need to be watchful and careful with an exceedingly excitable people all around us, an omnipresent enemy on the keen lookout for lives and plunder, a big country without law and order, and every man his own master. We kept our old trading guns and powder dry, and trusted Providence for the rest. We also often kept our tempers when to have acted rashly would have endangered the lives of all the whites in the North-West.

Paralleling all this the arranging for the big meeting on the plains went on. This was ticklish business; we were bringing the participants in old feuds together. Camps and men who for years had been shunning each other to keep from killing we were now trying to make see that men may dwell in peace together. We did a good deal during the spring of 1869 to prepare for the treaties with our Government which came years later. My share was peculiar. I had Wood Crees and half-breeds and Mountain and Wood Stoneys, and between these parties old quarrels and long-standing feuds and petty jealousies strongly obtained. These Stoneys were

hard to manage; they did not give a snap of the finger for anybody. Self-helpful, as Indians go, much more than the others were they, and extremely self-conscious; as hunters and warriors easily at the top of the heap; though few in number, greatly respected, especially by the Blackfeet tribes; quick, impulsive and nervous. Needless to say, I found my task by no means an easy one. Such men as Jacob and his father, old Adam, were invaluable to me. Then I began to win some of the wild young fellows. I could outrun them and outjump them and outlift the strongest, and was gradually becoming quite skilful in hunting, especially in picking off buffalo, and these things were, in the minds of the boys of these camps, rare good qualities. Then I could run a horse to get his speed out of him, or camp here to-day and very far yonder to-morrow, and these fellows admired action and pluck, and thus our influence was growing. Still ever and anon there would be trouble over gambling and women and horses, and then all our plans would be knocked crossways for a time. But we kept at it and slowly won our way, so that by the middle of May we had a respectable contingent ready to move from Pigeon Lake, and another to join our route later farther south and east.



## CHAPTER V.

We start for the big camp—Varied diet—My first breech-loader—A scare—A wonderful scene—A “great lone land”—Clerical costumes—Exciting buffalo hunts—Struck by lightning—Charged by two buffalo bulls—A battle royal—Changing conditions—Unerring instinct of Indian guides—Our camp rushed by a buffalo herd—Loss of our only waggon.

THE place of rendezvous for the great hunt was “somewhere on the big plains”—rather indefinite—but we had faith we could find it. Starting my people from the lake, I went into Edmonton partly on business and partly for the purpose of guiding and accompanying the Rev. Mr. Campbell and his brother-in-law, Mr. Snider, to our camp. We made some tall travelling from Edmonton to Battle River, where we caught up to my people and then moved on in a southeasterly direction towards the plains. Passing little Beaver Lake, crossing Buffalo Running Valley and then Willow Creek, and on to the last points of timber, our movement was from twenty to twenty-five miles per day, until we found buffalo enough to live on. Our routine was, early morning service, then down tents and



march, stopping for a noon spell, and then on until the early evening, when another service and rest came. Of course relays of guards were on duty each night to prevent surprise or the stealing or driving off of our stock.

All day the hunters were out on each side of our line of march. We had to forage our way, not on the enemy this time, but out of Mother Nature's storehouse, from which the natural man had lived for centuries, but which was even now in this part of the country showing signs of exhaustion. What a bill of fare ours was—buffalo, moose, elk, black-tailed and white-tailed deer, antelope, bear, beaver, lynx, skunk, porcupine, badger, swan, geese of various kinds, ducks of endless variety, prairie chickens and partridges, eggs and chickens and ducklings in all stages of incubation, the sap of the poplar, the wild turnip, and also a species of wild carrot, etc., etc. But it was always essential for one's comfort of mind and stomach to really know what had been brought in, or perhaps what you had been able yourself to bag, before you ordered from such a *menu*, or perhaps the answer might come back, "I am sorry, but none such killed to-day, sir."

Sunday was the hard day for the missionary on such a trip and in such company. Any amount of trouble all the week, in the saddle or

on foot from early morning until late at night, then often taking your turn on guard all night; but with Sunday the responsibility of keeping such a crowd within bounds was no easy task. Perhaps we magnified our office; at any rate, I was always more exhausted, mentally and physically, on a Sunday evening than I was all through the week. Not that we lacked encouragement, for God blessed our labors. Perhaps we were too legal and strictly Sabbatarian; but we must be consistent, and for this, I believe, we were doing our duty for the time we lived in. On this trip Mr. Campbell would often preach and I interpret. The Indians called him "the black head," because of his hair being very dark. Sometimes we were feasting, and again there came camp after camp with children crying for food, and mothers anxious, and we all felt the gloom of hard times. But on we moved to the last timber, where we camped for a day to allow time for cutting and trimming of the poles and triangles requisite for the drying of meat, also for the gathering of firewood, for as many as had means of carrying it, and then we pushed out into the boundless prairie.

One fine morning, many days before we reached the gathering camps we were to join, Messrs. Campbell and Snider and myself rode out to reconnoitre one side of our line of march.

We went far, and about noon killed a badger, and, making a fire of buffalo chips, cooked some of the meat. I remember that Mr. Snider and myself ate a little of it, but Mr. Campbell could not touch it, at which I was not surprised, for badger is "strong meat." Continuing our ride, we finally towards evening sighted some bulls, the first my friends had seen. Stopping on a hill and unsaddling to rest our horses, we made signs to a couple of Stoneys moving in another direction, and these, seeing our signals, came toward us. They were a long way off and evening was well on when we started the buffalo. The Indians killed one and I another. This was my first experience with a breech-loader with fixed ammunition. I had obtained one from my brother David during the winter. It was a Smith and Wesson single-loader, and when I saw my bullet strike the ground away beyond the bull, I thought I had missed him, and was preparing to give him a second shot when I saw the blood jumping from both sides of the huge fellow, and very soon he fell. This was a sample of strong shooting I had never before seen, and my Indian friends thought with me that this was a wonderful gun.

It was now near dark, and we concluded to camp beside my bull, while I butchered the animal. My friends busied themselves gathering

chips and making a fire. It was early summer, but the night was cold. We broiled bull meat on dry chips and ate it straight—not even salt had we. A night on the endless plains, no tent, no blanket, and not too well clad, any of us; but as we also had to guard our camp and horses, we piled on the chips and endured. My friends soon squeezed all the romance out of such an experience and heartily wished themselves back in the camp.

Next morning we loaded up most of the meat and started for where we supposed our camp would be. We had not ridden far when we saw a troop of horsemen coming down upon us. Not knowing whether these were friends or foes, we got ready for the latter. I showed my friends how to loosen up their loads of meat in readiness to drop them, and thus lighten the horses for either action or flight. On came the horsemen at a good quick gallop, bunched together, some with long braids and some with loose hair, hanging leggings, and regular Plain Indian dress. Both our Indians and myself were for some time deceived, and we had decided they were enemies and were bracing up for the fight when they proved to be the young men of our camp outlooking for us. We were glad, and so were they, to find us safe, as the camp had become anxious on our account. We told them where we had

left the balance of our bull's meat, and they went on, indicating to us where we might expect to intercept the camp.

While moving down the country, looking for our friends from the eastern points, we had several very long rides. One day I shot a bull, and as he stood bracing himself and stubbornly refusing to die, Mr. Campbell rode up and, drawing on him with his six-shooter, fired several shots right at his forehead, hoping to knock him down. But the bull merely shook his head at each shot, which did not seem to make any more impression than if one had flung boiled peas at the old fellow. Thick skulls and huge frames of great weight had the lords of these great herds. We saw only the stragglers, but enough to keep our camp going, as we travelled eastward hoping every day to find signs of our people. With two Indians I went as far as Nose Hill, a great eminence which stands out as the landmark to be seen for many miles in every direction; but from its highest point we saw no sign or trace of those we were eagerly looking for. I say eagerly, for already I saw signs of mutiny with my mixed assemblage. More than one trouble which threatened internal war I had to work hard to allay. For some of these peoples this was a first venture out on the treeless plains, and they were manifesting unmis-



takable signs of discontent. I was all the while keenly searching for the camps we were to join, but not until late that evening, and when I did not expect it, did I find a willow stick with father's well-known pencil-mark to tell me how far east they were, and where they were heading for. This was definite, and when we got back to camp the next day it greatly cheered our company.

Again I set off in advance. This time Mr. Campbell went with me, and we rode far without any signs, and were about to turn back when I said, "Let us go to yon hill and no farther," when, to our joy, on the slope of the hill we found the trail of a big party, which as we followed up led us to another sign from father, written on the shoulder-blade of a buffalo, telling us should we see it that he left this camp the morning before. They could not be over two days from us, and possibly only one, and, sure enough, we rode into their camp the same evening. I can tell you, my reader, it was a glorious sight for me. My anxiety was now over, but, independent of this, the scene was full of life and romance, history and tradition. Reaching the top of the hill and looking down upon this moving town of buffalo-skin lodges, with its circles of tents, its hundreds of carts and waggons, innumerable travois, and many

hundreds of horses and cattle feeding in proximity, it seemed as though the ideal nomadic life of the long past was before me—Abraham and Isaac and Jacob with their flocks and herds; but this is even older, for the flocks and herds are still wild and free, and as yet belong to no individual. This is communal; the individual has not yet come in. It is our work to bring in the individual, and as I looked and thought, I saw even then that it would take time and great patience to make the change. The old was ingrained; it was in the blood many centuries before the source of all wisdom and prophecy had spoken, "Ye must be born again," and very slowly the quickest among men are learning the lesson, "Old things must pass away and all things become new." But we are now in camp amongst our friends, and one with them, and we adapt ourselves to existing conditions with the readiest of them.

Having found these people, the next thing was to bring our quota in, and we proceeded to do this by sending my old friend Samson out to meet them and escort the western section to this camp. It was decided by the council not to move until the Stoney camp was brought up. Samson was instructed to carry greetings of welcome, to inform the chiefs and head men that the big camp would await their coming, that the

scouts had brought in word of plenty of buffalo not far ahead, that the enemy had been sighted and also felt quite a number of times, and therefore as they approached this camp they must increase their vigilance. Knowing Samson as I did, I felt there was no need of my returning; he would find and bring in, of this I felt sure; therefore, being tired with worry and responsibility, I was glad to remain and rest. We had come far and had ridden hard, and it was not until the evening of the third day that our party came in sight, and was met and escorted in by a troop of light cavalry from the big camp. This crowd had come from one to two hundred miles from the north and west inclusive, and was composed of English, Scotch and French half-breeds, Wood and Plain Crees, and Mountain and Wood Stoneys. The Churches were represented by all the Protestant missions in the field, and one teacher, Mr. Snider, and the Roman Catholics by Mr. Scollen, an Irishman of the intense sort, to whom Britain was "Nazareth"—no good could possibly come out of her.

These people had converged at this spot from various points; some from the vicinity of Edmonton, sixty miles from Pigeon Lake and north; others from Victoria, one hundred and fifty miles north and east; others from White Fish Lake and vicinity, two hundred

and ten miles north and east; and others from Lac la Biche, two hundred and fifty miles north and east. Then the Mountain Stoneys had come from all distances along the mountain, say, from one hundred to two hundred miles west and south of Pigeon Lake. To show what a country we came through, I am safe in saying that not one hundred of these many hundreds of miles had been opened by man. On and through Nature's own handiwork in the primeval solitudes we had rolled and dragged and ridden to this gathering of the tribes and clans, and all the land we each and every one had come over was suitable for the making of homes for humanity; soil, grass, water, timber, climate, especially endowed with properties for the breeding of a hardy, thrifty race of men. To-day we in this camp are thoroughly representative of its population. Verily this is the "great lone land," and this is entirely a new venture, the bringing of these people thus together. We want to do them good in three direct ways—Christianizing, educating, civilizing. Some say civilize first, but our experience is that this is not nor yet can it be so great an agency for permanent civilization as Christianity, therefore we hope to begin on sure foundations. However, this whole scheme is sadly handicapped; we have no woods to shade us, we

have no big tent to hold the hundreds, as would be possible later; we have no store of provisions, but must constantly move and hunt as we go, and more than a living for the present is a dire necessity; we must also and now make provision for the future, both for home use and for sale. Every one could readily see that no one matter could take up particular attention, but altogether must be worked as best we could. Storm and heat, hunger and thirst, hunting and war, paganism and contending Christianities, and all the rest heaped together, must be handled in hope that good might ensue.

We organized at once, appointed a captain and council and constables, made rules to govern our hunting and movements, chose our several guards, set every man in his place, and moved on out over the plains in a south-easterly direction. Soon we were on the skirts of the "big herd," and provision-making began in earnest. Every day had its troubles. Somebody broke the law, and his clan resented punishment or fine, and we as missionaries had our hands full to keep the peace. I was several times hauled out of my camp and bed to allay excitement among the Stoneys, who would not stand any nonsense, but were ready to fight at a moment's notice. Some Plain Cree fancied he recognized a horse amongst theirs which had been stolen



from him (so he said), and wanted the horse or demanded pay for it. In vain the Stoney might prove that the horse in question was one of his own raising, or one he had bought across the mountains from the Kootenays; still the Cree brought his people to back his claim, and as this was not a matter for our captain or council, the missionary interested had to come in. However, we did get on without coming to any killing, and by and by our meetings began to have influence.

One day, as we were moving, some buffalo ran alongside of our trail, and a camp rule was flagrantly broken by some French half-breeds. There was general indignation, and at the noon spell the crier rode around camp calling upon all men to assemble in the centre of the noon camp to consider the trouble. As a matter of interest and on principle I went, and when the addresses were waxing warm one old French half-breed said, "And why is it that when we hold these councils these Protestant ministers are invited and our priest is not?" The old man was looking straight at me as he spoke, and I quietly answered, "My grandfather, I heard the crier of our camp calling upon men to come to this gathering. Perhaps those who have not considered themselves men have stayed away;" and the crowd, quick to see the point because of the

manner of dress, answered with cheers and laughter, and we swung around the danger spot for the time. I had often heard the natives, Catholic and Protestant and pagan, curiously remarking upon the wearing habit of the priest, and I had wondered myself at such a costume. Even from childhood I have almost hated anything like ecclesiastical costuming. To my mind no man should be among and of the people as much as the priest or pastor, and even costume differentiates. God knows, we want individuality, but not the kind that comes of distinct costumes.

As often as we could we held religious services. We did not lecture or educate as much as I think we might have done to profit, therefore we did not reach all, but I suppose we were doing our best according to our light at the time. The Blackfeet were watching us closely, and this was quite natural, for the reprisals because of the treacherous murder of Maskepetoon had been rapid in succession all spring, and the enemy was now seeking his turn. Our people were watchful, and we did not fear direct attack, as the size of our camp would compel respect.

We had some big buffalo runs at this time, one of which was quite exciting. Perhaps there were between three and four hundred of us as





“Soon we were met by the returning herds dashing with full speed upon our line.” (Page 75.)

we approached the buffalo that morning, when they were feeding on the ascending slope of a broad, gently rounded hill. The incline which we were approaching was dotted thickly with the buffalo. They seemed to be densely packed on the summit, beyond which we could not see. As we rode up the stragglers fell in on to the herd, and soon the top of the flat, oblong hill was black with them. We rode slowly, in a long line, our captain and officers a little in advance, and as we came near the summit the herd broke down the other side and the word was passed to charge. I was on a good horse, and with half a dozen others was soon in advance of the general line. The dust was thick as we rode on the dead race down the declivity. I did not know, nor do I think did many of our party, that at and along the foot of the hill there was a long narrow lake with precipitous banks. At this the advance buffalo balked and turned, and soon we were met by the returning herds dashing at full speed upon our line. The little company of riders I was with was now right in the centre of the meeting rush. Buffalo young and old all around us, and we squeezed and jammed in amongst them and compelled to run with them. I had steel stirrups, and I could hear the ring of them as they struck the horns or were struck in turn by the rushing, seething



crowd of wild animals. To make things worse, the main line of hunters came up against the right angle turn of the herd, and presently arrows and balls came, it seemed to us, all around where we were. Not a shot was fired by any one of our small detachment. We looked for room, and room only; for the time we had too much buffalo! Bulls and cows, and yearlings and calves, and noise and wild swirl and gallop—I can never forget the scene, nor yet how mighty glad I was when the flat along the lake became broader and we spread out more. Now we looked for our game, and began to kill. For about eight or ten minutes, or possibly less, myself and the few with me were having a lively time, and were thankful when we were well out of the scrape with life and limb intact.

Another day I was chasing a big fat bull, and so eager was I to kill this one that I took but little notice of what other bulls were doing. Presently my fellow got angry, put up his tail, lowered his head and turned on me. Just then I felt my horse cringing from the other side, and when I looked there was another bull that evidently had lost his temper also, for here he was close to my horse, head down, tail up, and about to toss us with his horns. With quick action I sent my heels into my horse's sides, and he, fine fellow that he was, spurted and shot out

between the two wild bulls, each of whom, not knowing the action of the other, came head on with full speed. I held up my horse in time to see them meet. Both fell with the impetus of the compact; then with a roar one, recovering sooner than the other, dashed at his antagonist with double fury. For a time I witnessed a battle royal between the big fellows, and then closed the fight by shooting both.

Another day, after killing several buffalo and butchering them, and sending my loaded cart back to camp with the meat, I fell in with one Magnus House, one of our Victoria people, and we came across some more bulls. I ran and killed one of these, but as it was now evening we decided to butcher this animal and bring in the meat next morning. When we were about through, a thunder-storm came up, and the rain and lightning were terrific. My rifle had a strap on it, with which I was wont to carry it at times. I flung the strap over my shoulder and mounted my horse, but just then a violent clap of thunder burst near us, and the lightning knocked my horse flat to the ground. The butt of the rifle, which projected along my shoulder, seemed to catch some of the lightning, and this set fire to my hair and stunned me for a little. I remember reaching for my head with both hands, and, as it was raining hard, finding no

difficulty in putting out the fire in my hair. Then there came an interval when I was unconscious, and again I remember Magnus asking, "John, John, are you hurt?" and I said I felt queer. Magnus again brought me to by asking what we should do, and I told him to go to camp and my horse would follow; but he said he did not know the way. I tried to tell him, and we started campwards. It was now very dark, and sometimes I knew I was on the horse and again I was off into a sort of dream-land, but after what seemed to be a long time, Magnus woke me up by saying he was lost. I now made a desperate effort to draw in my reasoning faculties, and after some time came to a decision and started ahead, and going on by and by saw a light. Pointing this out, I said, "That is our camp, Magnus; keep straight for it," and again I was back in the sleep into which the electricity had put me. What a relief to be behind and let the horse follow, and not to be compelled to think. When we did reach camp I went off to sleep at once, and for days felt a strange sensation coming over me. One of my train-dogs with us at the time also was affected, and ever afterwards ran for the house or camp at the sound of thunder. On the plains he would rush into the tent, and we would throw some robes over the poor fellow until the storm was over.

At another time on this trip I killed a tremendous big bull, and did what I could to get him into position for skinning and butchering, but was unable to do so, and rode to the next mound to find someone to help me. However, there was no one in sight, and I came back and got the big fellow's head swung over, and my back under his shoulder, and with feet firmly fixed lifted his whole front in shape; but when it was done I found that my back was very much hurt. I became violently sick, and though I was at work in a few days it was more than a year before I got that kink out of my spine.

Meetings were held morning and evening and all day Sunday, when the weather permitted, and we all worked hard. The veterans, Mr. Steinhauer and father, and Mr. Campbell and myself as juniors, did what we could to stem the tide of old life and turn it into the new. Hard work it was, and very complex, and full of details which multiplied every day, almost every hour, as only the worker and his God know. Let me say a word as to the personnel of our company. First, there was the old chief Sayakemat, who for years always had quite a following, but was now since Maskepetoon's death looked upon as head chief. He was altogether of a distinct type from the former; in the main well-meaning, but in no way assertive. He was

a polygamist, as many of the older men were at the time. He and father were good friends, and slowly the old man was developing a desire for Christianity. Of the younger men who were coming up there were Pakani and Samson and Ermine-skin. These men were meeting the changing times. They had all the past as a birthright, and up to middle life constant practice in the rites of paganism; but now Christianity and civilization and the dawn of changed conditions are upon them, and unlike the older people, to whom these changes came slowly, these men will have to take part in a cyclone of civilization. Our captain, old John Whitford, or, as he was most commonly called "Omacheesk" ("Prone to hunt"), was a genuine Plain man and guide. He had fought the Sioux and Blackfeet, and, for one born in this land, travelled afar, even across the great mountains into Oregon and Washington territories; had lived among the Flatheads and Snake Indians and the Kootenays and Shuswhaps; had quite a history, and now as the captain of this present host is renowned as a guide of unerring instinct. Like all aboriginal men, he travelled without compass and yet went straight. Of this we had positive evidence, for a cloud of smoke came upon us and for several days the land was dark, and yet it was necessary for feed and water, and also



because of the movement of buffalo, for our camp to travel a considerable distance. And as straight and steady as any true pilot "Old John" took us to good pasture and fresh water. Verily it was a dark time; our noon-day fires of buffalo chips were lurid and weird in their flaming, and no one felt like leaving camp. We kept our horses close and fast, and put on double guards, for these seemed as much needed by day as at night. While this dense smoke-cloud rested upon the land a big bunch of buffalo came careening right into camp, and for a time there was wild commotion. I seized my gun and was just in time to shoot one as it dashed between two tents. Fortunately none of our people were hurt in this stampede, but for a little while there was much noise and running to and fro.

After some weeks of hunting and provision-making, also a continuous effort on the part of the missionaries and teachers present to inspire desire for Christianity and civilization, and in so doing teach industry and economy and thrift, our large camp was split up by each section taking its own course homewards. This was not done until we were pretty well into the woods. That beautiful region which stretches from the South Branch in a semi-circle northward and westward even to the mountains, and which is the scene of the meeting of the plains

and woods, and where each of these great factors compromise the one with the other, forms a belt of country two hundred miles wide and many hundreds of miles long. Here we have a scenic land of woods and prairies of natural planting, with lawns and terraces, avenues and parks, and hills and dales wherein the eye and sense may revel for hundreds of miles. How often when coming out of the north country and reaching this borderland have I rejoiced, and as frequently coming in from the bare plains have I felt glad to alight from my horse in the shade of a sweet smelling and full-leaved grove. Then I cut the wild rhubarb and roasted it, and ate to repletion of vegetable diet, which my meat-laden stomach craved, and was satisfied. How extremely of the earth and earthy we are at the best.

No doubt this gathering had done good. If it accomplished nothing else it had taken the self-conscious conceit out of a good many, for in isolation and dwelling with one class and kind, and in remotely small communities, man becomes heady; but such a gathering as we had organized had shown to many a poor soul that there were other people in this world beside themselves. Nor had all the preaching and praying and lecturing been in vain; the seed was sown, and would spring into fruition even after many days.

The Stoneys went westward, and as Mr. Campbell was now to be stationed at Pigeon Lake, and to be their missionary, I did not go with them, but went in with the Victoria settlement as per instructions from my Chairman. Never in all their history had these Mountain and Wood Stoneys gathered under such conditions, and now having learned some useful lessons they will pitch towards the setting sun until, near the mountains, they scatter into little camps to return to their wanderings for a season. The Lac la Biche, White Fish Lake, Good Fish and Saddle Lake people have the big Saskatchewan to cross, and when home their gardens to weed and hoe, and hay to make for the coming winter, and so have the Victorians. We are all well loaded with pemmican and dried meat, etc., but as the consumption of such food without any cereal mixture, and for the most of the year without any vegetable, is enormous, there must be another season hunt to prepare for the coming winter. Carts are creaking, waggons rattling, travois bending, and burdened and packed horses groaning as we severally set our faces homewards—that is, those of us who have homes just now. Personally we can sing,

“No foot of land do I possess,  
No cottage in this wilderness.”

Although the whole North-West is before us we have no land or home except our camp. The people we are now living for we are also living with, but we are happy and busy and learning.

Nothing extraordinary marked our homeward journey save the stealing of some of the horses of those who straggled from our camp. Steadily we travelled, and after days of pitching tents in the wilderness we came to our present Jordan, the glorious Saskatchewan, and crossed over to what has been to some of us a veritable Canaan. For the next few weeks we had a busy time with our missionary work, and also with making hay and looking after gardens. Swinging the scythe from sunrise to sunset is great exercise; the whole body is brought into action, and the general result in our case was very much more profitable and economic than the swinging of dumb-bells or Indian clubs. During this time the only break was a raid made by the Blackfeet, who succeeded in running off with a few horses, and for a little time one morning we were quite excited over the purpose of following them up and giving them a lesson; but finally, after some hurried preparations, it was decided to continue our work and let the horses and thieves get away for this time.

Farm waggons were very scarce in 1869 on

the Saskatchewan. Father had one, and we were using it in haying. We were just about to start a fresh stack when father, who was on the ground, being annoyed at some bulldogs who were worrying the team, set fire to a little hay at some distance from the load, which I had just begun to throw off. A puff of wind suddenly caught some sparks from the fire and blew them on to the hay I had forked to the ground, and in a moment the whole thing was in flames. I held the reins and hastened to unhook the team, but my hands and arms were scorched and the horses' tails were burned before I got them loose; and, alas, in a few minutes, as if it had been so much paper, the waggon was gone, all save the ironwork, and we had perforce to resort to the old reliable Red River cart, the "chariot of the plains."



## CHAPTER VI.

The "fall hunt"—A brutal murder—My horse poisoned—  
"This is the way to do it!"—Father's abbreviated musket—Samson's dash and skill as a buffalo runner—Bob and I do some scouting—The silence of Nature's solitude—A hair-raising adventure—I make new acquaintances.

THE summer of 1869 was noted as the driest we had ever experienced in that northern country. Gardens and crops suffered in consequence, and it soon became apparent that we must take another trip to the plains for provisions. Most of the Indians, the regular nomads, had not come into the settlements, but had remained out in the border country waiting for our reinforcements, and watching also for the buffalo to come farther north, as was their habit at this season; for, contrary to outside ideas, the trend of the great herds was northward and westward during autumn and winter, and southward and eastward during spring and summer. Father and I decided to accompany these parties, and to join in the "fall hunt." We also decided to leave our families at home, trusting to Providence and the people who remained to care for them. I took my wife and children over to

White Fish Lake, and it was here that our third daughter was born—Augusta, or “Gussie,” as she was named by her good grandfather, Rev. H. B. Steinhauer.

Let no one imagine for a moment that there was little labor in arranging for the fall hunt, for I can assure him that to make preparations for such an expedition entailed an endless amount of worry and hard work. To say nothing about those who were dependent upon us, and for whom we must furnish and plan, there were carts and harness to be mended, horses to be sought in great unfenced pastures, and, when found, to be carefully guarded that they might be neither stolen nor lost before the start is made. Then came the crossing of the big river, and very glad we all were when we began to roll out upon the trail, which for the first hundred miles was becoming clearly defined.

We had not gone far when there occurred a brutal murder of a woman by her husband. The villain fled, but was said to be prowling around the camp, contriving to elude the avenger of blood, who silently but determinedly was upon his trail. This murderer was for the time being a source of fear and dread to all the women and children in camp, and there were very few unarmed stragglers in consequence. We ren-

dezvoused at the edge of the big plain, near the Nose Hill, and began to feel the buffalo at once. Soon the work of provision-making was in full blast. This was now the season for the killing of cows, and the farrow animals were in great demand. The skill of the hunter lay in being able to choose and pick at great disadvantages, as well as to kill, and to do this quickly; for not only were the cows faster than the bulls, and harder on horses, but other hunters were after the fat animals as well as he, and he must be quick and sharp and wise in order to fill the bill now on.

It was at this time that the only case of clear spite on the part of an Indian towards myself took place. I had a splendid horse that I called Archie, a noted buffalo runner, but his hoofs had worn smooth with the autumn grasses, and I had him shod with copper clips, a common custom on the plains with the half-breed hunters, the heads of the nails acting as corks. When he was shod I saddled him up and rode out of camp a little way, and just then there came a young buffalo at full speed across the plain, followed by an Indian on a played-out horse a long way behind. I thought this a fine chance to try my horse with his new clips, so I cantered up and, shouting to the Indian, "I will kill him for you," dashed in, and in a few jumps Archie brought

me up with the young bull, which I bowled over with the first shot. Pulling up beside the carcass I was astonished to see my friend riding back into camp. I called after him, but he did not deign to look at me. I then rode after him and found him in his lodge, and told him that the buffalo was his ; but he was sullen and said he did not want it, would not have it, so I got one of my boys and a cart and went for the animal.

The next morning Archie was almost dead ; his legs and body were very much swollen, and his life and spirit all gone. You may depend upon it I was terribly put out, but as yet did not blame any one. I went to consult "Old John," who was the best horse doctor in the camp. As soon as the old man saw the horse he said, "He is poisoned," and asked me what I had done. I told him of the shooting of the buffalo, and he at once said, "That fellow has done it." It took a lot of medicine and care and a year's absolute rest to bring Archie back to something like his natural condition, but he never fully recovered his speed. The Indians were indignant at this act of one of their number, and for a time ostracised the offender, but I never said a word to him on the subject, and always felt that perhaps I had been a little too "previous" in thus coming to his aid.

We moved on out to Sounding Lake, and had much success in gathering provisions. The Blackfeet and their allies were about us all this time, and it was only by ceaseless vigilance that we kept our lives and stock from them. While at Sounding Lake a number of our cart oxen strayed away, and as the country was freshly tracked up by the buffalo, we had great difficulty in finding them. We were away from camp several days hunting the truants, and succeeded in finding some of them, but it was not until the dead of the next winter that all were recovered. The loss of the oxen very much affected our progress, and in consequence we found that we could not keep up with the large camp. We concluded therefore to break off from this and travel leisurely northward, filling up our capacity of transport as we might find the buffalo. Moreover, our camp was almost too large for successful hunting; many of these people, careless of the future, considered themselves burdened when they had two weeks' provisions ahead, and could not have the patience to wait for those who were in earnest in their business of making store for the future. Another reason lay in the lawlessness of the large camp. No man had as yet, like Maskepetoon, come to the front to rule the disorderly element, and the spring and summer had been given so much to war-parties



in revenge for his death that the younger men were hard to hold in check ; so, thinking it better to separate than to quarrel, we left them and went our own way.

I must here describe what I saw and experienced one afternoon prior to our leaving the camp. Many buffalo were passing within sight, and we gathered at the call of the crier to run ; but between us and them was exceedingly rough ground, and there was a division amongst our council and hunters. Some counselled that we should move camp and run to-morrow. "The ground is dangerous," they urged ; "many will be hurt, and horses will be lamed, if not killed." Others were for running at once, and the dispute waxed loud and hot. As I sat on my horse listening to the argument and waiting for the outcome, a bold fellow suddenly gave a whoop of defiance and rushed his horse out on to the rough ground straight for the buffalo. Others quickly followed, and I with them. I was gently cantering my horse through and over the holes, waiting until I struck better ground, when a Plain Indian brave, in full costume, dashed past me with a yell, shouting, "This is the way to do it, John !" I cried in response, "Go ahead, my friend !" when presently over went his horse, flinging the ambitious rider with his legs and arms sprawling between hillocks and lumps, and

his head pillowed on one of them, facing me as I came on at a more sober pace. I could not resist giving a whoop or two in my turn, and as my horse almost jumped on to him I shouted into his face, "This is the way to do it!" and he answered back, "That's true; you are wiser than I, John." Many a tumble I witnessed during the ride over that rough spot, probably about a mile across, and many a laugh I had as feathers and breech-cloth, bow and quiver and old flint-lock, paint and flesh and blood and horse went tumbling pell-mell around me. But my little Bob was sure and keen, and like a lot of finely adjusted springs, and without a stumble we reached the better ground. We soon turned up several fine cows, and I was skinning one of these when I heard the clatter of hoofs coming my way. Seizing my gun I jumped into the saddle, holding myself in readiness for another run if there should be any real good ones in the bunch. Soon over the hill at the foot of which I was came at break-neck speed some twenty-five cows, yearlings and calves, with a horseman right after them, whom I recognized to be father on old Besho, both horse and rider so keen on the hunt that they never saw me. Immediately I took stock of the bunch and saw there were no fat ones in it, so I alighted from my horse to continue my

work, when bang went one shot and down dropped a cow dead, and again another bang and down went a second cow. Then a very proud hunter drew up, and, seeing me, said, "That's the way to do it, John," and appeared rather crestfallen when I answered, "Yes, if they were any good." However, I eulogized his shooting, which was really good considering that he had only the remnant of a double-barrelled shotgun, which the readers of "Pathfinding" will remember I burst and had to cut off, leaving the barrel only about eight inches long. With this father had, at a good range and while on the dead run, knocked down both cows, and he had laid them about fifty yards apart, all of which, barring the picking, was good work. Father never had the opportunity of learning to pick and choose while on the race as I had. Both Mr. Woolsey and father had made me the commissariat officer of the mission party, thus giving me great advantage in this respect.

We found that after leaving the large camp we numbered only some thirty lodges, and that when we reorganized our turn as guard came on in quick succession; but the advantage of quieter hunting and a more orderly camp suited our purpose for the time being very much better. We moved on eastward and north, making plenty of provisions and of the best

quality. My friend Samson was with us as my constant companion. Several times I was with him when we brought large herds to camp, and our run was made near home, which gave everybody a chance and was much more secure than when we had to go far from our camp to hunt. I will never forget those wild rides beside my friend when, with a peculiar whoop and cry, he would start a herd, and then, watching the wind and lay of country, continue to manœuvre them homewards. What a voice he had, and such magnetism in the cry and yell he would give. The heads of the rushing herds would submit and almost seem to jump at his bidding, and thus over hill and across valley we would swing at a wild gallop, our horses flecked with foam and yet as eager in the chase as ourselves. And when the camp would see us and come out to the run, we would dash in and kill as best we could. Thus we hunted, and worked between hunts in pounding meat, rendering fat, making pemmican, baling dried meat, or mending our wooden carts. To the missionaries also came the holding of meetings early and late, and constant personal intercourse with all we came in touch with. Indeed, there was no slack time in all this work, for it was foreign to father's nature to be still and wait for opportunity. He came of a venturesome and seeking

race, and was always on the alert for work and the chance to further his aims. Soon our carts and vehicles began to creak with their loads, and we moved nearer home, finding that the buffalo had gone northward.

It was sometime during the last of September that our party crossed the Battle River at the mouth of the Iron Creek. We had been enjoying glorious weather, and this day was a perfect one. We stopped for noon at the junction of the streams. Both father and "Old John" requested me to ride on that afternoon as scout to the party. We were now approaching the routes of war-parties both east and west, and I was more at liberty than the rest of our men. Moreover, my saddle-horses were in better condition than theirs, for I was what you might call a light rider, more careful and easier in the seat than many. I suppose, too, they had some confidence in my ability, hence the request. Accordingly, I saddled up Little Bob No. 2, who really belonged to my brother-in-law, Mr. Hardisty, but on this trip was one of my saddle-ponies and runners. Away out of camp and on to the front we went, always keeping in view the scout's main idea, that is, to see all about him and never to be seen himself unless it be of service to his purpose to let his presence be known. It has always been my policy—I might say my



nature—to make companions of those around me. It might be an old heathen conjurer or gambler or warrior—anybody; I never went into their previous history on suspicion, but generally at once gave them a large measure of confidence. And I did this with my horses and dogs when they were at all responsive, and thus there was a large degree of mutual understanding between us. My present Bob and self thoroughly understood each other. Many a long ride and also many a hard race had we together; for hundreds of miles we had jogged on the trail and off from it, and with only the lariat between us had slept—or rather I slept while Bob cropped grass and kept nose and ears and whole being alert. And then I had watched, and he in turn dropped on to the grass and, turning over on his side, slept the sleep of the equine just, or stood on three legs in turn resting and dosing in his way.

This autumn day was like Indian summer, the atmosphere quiet and still, and nature at rest. The summer's work was finished; forest and grass and herbage had fully grown and ripened, the last colorings had come to the great pastures for the season, the last and brightest tints were now on, in full glory. All this lay in gentle repose before me, and I ardently wished that man would turn from his evil ways so that there

would be no necessity to constantly act and watch and listen as I was now doing. On up the coolie, sometimes on foot and again in the saddle, cantering across a hidden bit of plain or lowland, but watching, always watching, ground and horizon and copse and bush and bits of lawn-like prairie, then more open country. The flight of carrion birds and of crows and ravens is noted; the movements of wolves and coyotes, the action of buffalo, especially stragglers, who in ones and twos and more are here and yonder, and because of which you must be most careful, for these if once startled would give you straight away to some other scout, of whose vicinity you have been altogether ignorant but of whose near presence you are now most unpleasantly aware. Coming to a bare prairie ridge, you alight and spread your horse-blanket under the running pad which serves as saddle, and then, letting your horse graze at the end of the lariat, you stretch and gently wriggle and slide in advance of him across the slope and over the summit and down the other side until cover is reached; your horse coming slowly and nipping the close-cropped grass, and with the blanket spread over him and pad up on shoulders looking in the distance, or even not so far away, like a buffalo gently feeding as he travels. Bob and I thus scouted on until the

sun was dropping in the western sky, and as yet had found no sign of human life ; then away up on the edge of the brow of Iron Creek hill we held up, and I slipped the pad from my horse and sat down while he fed beside me and rested ; that is, we stayed bodily in one place, but eye and ear and brain were all the time busy, for aside from our immediate purpose the scene was lovely, and both Bob and I were thankful that we were denizens of such a world as this.

Truly the heavens above and the earth beneath were most beautiful and satisfying to our senses. The sweep of the valley, the windings of the stream, the autumn tints, the unoccupied fields and farms and lawns and terraces of the future, the natural placing of the clumps of timber, the smell of the land both wholesome and rich, the wild cattle to be seen here and there feeding or moving lazily down to the creek for water, the long beards of the bulls swaying rhythmically to their ponderous tread ; yonder a wolf or coyote slinking from clump to clump of bush, or indifferently seated on his haunches surveying the scene, even as we were—all this was before our vision, nor yet sign of any man with it. To our ears there came no articulate sound ; a hush was upon all things. This was the time of day for quiet in nature, but in

fancy we caught the rumble of waggons on well-travelled roads, the shriek of the locomotive, the hum of machinery, the lowing and bleating of herds and flocks, the tinkle of the cowbell, the ringing of the church and school bells. I could hear all these in anticipation, for verily the land before me was worthy and in good time it would come to its inheritance. Thus looking and listening a short time elapsed, and I said to Bob, "See here, old fellow, we must be moving," and he lifted his big eyes up to mine and answered, "I am ready, my dear John."

We were now several miles in advance of where our camp would be pitched for the night, and while I was saddling up I saw a nice little bunch of buffalo come out upon the brow of the hill across the valley. They were feeding peacefully, and I saw the most of them were cows and with few calves. There would be fat meat there. I also saw that the ground was very good, and the temptation to cross over and have a near look at them became strong. I scratched Bob's chin and neck, and he rubbed his nose on my shoulder; we looked into each other's eyes, and it was understood between us. Soon with His Highness at my heels I struck down into a coolie and made for the creek (only by chance would any one see us); then at the creek I mounted and forded and kept in the creek up

to another gully, which climbed the hill and ran out near the herd, of which we wanted a close view. At the head of the coolie I left Bob down a few yards, and, crawling up, beheld a black-robed cow, sleek and clean and beautiful in the glossiness of her new coat, and I said, "I must kill that one, at any rate." I straightway went back to Bob and told him, and he said he would do his part. Of this I had no doubt, for the time was opportune and the ground fine, so I looked to my gun, which was a breech-loader of the old type. You swung open the breech like a barn-door, and inserted the cartridge, which, when you closed the breech, was cut by this action so that the powder ran into the nipple, and then you put on a big cap made like a plug hat, and thus your gun was loaded. This one was a strong shooter, and I had found it do good work all autumn. Next I saw that the powder was well down in the nipple, and felt for my cartridges in the pocket of my leather jacket; then tightening the girths and testing my stirrup straps, taking another more emphatic look all around, and giving Bob a pat and caress, I mounted and in a moment we were at full speed. Before the black-robed cow was far on the way she was down and dead, and we passed her with the impetus of our spurt. I picked out another cow, this time fairly shaking with fat, and I



asked Bob and he said, "Just as you like," and she also was pressed and caught and killed.

The hunt had taken but a very few minutes, and the run was so quick that Bob was not a bit blown as I rode him back to the black cow after straightening out the fat one for skinning before we went, and all the while looking everywhere for some signs that we had been seen. Failing to perceive any of the latter, I settled down to skin the black cow for a head and tail robe, the season and quality of this one making it of special value as a bed or travelling robe. Before taking out my knife I unsaddled Bob, dropped the bit from his mouth, tied the end of the lariat to the leg of the cow, and said to him, "Now, eat all you can, but keep your eyes and ears and nose at work all the same, that is a good boy;" and he again assured me of his part. Then I felt for my cartridges and placed my rifle so that one of my moccasined feet would constantly grip it, and then I drew my knife and steel and began to skin the cow. This I did carefully, for I wanted the whole robe. All the afternoon we had not seen the fresh sign of a man, and undoubtedly there was none; but, as the sequel proved, we had come just short of a party when we turned to cross the valley. I had not been very long at work when Bob gave a sudden start and looked keenly

across the valley. Sheathing the knife, I picked up my gun and walked over to him, but he began again to nip grass. Just then I saw a big wolf slip between the clumps of timber across the valley, and saying to Bob, "Is that all you saw, old fellow? why so much fuss over a wolf?" back to work I went with all precaution. But very soon Bob gave a jump and a decided snort, and I knew something was near, and again got ready and spoke to him; but at that instant there came the warwhoop from sixty or seventy throats, and in such volume and so near as to fairly curdle the blood in my veins. I looked, and up over the crest of the hill came the wild crew on the dead run. I saw their painted faces, saw the flint-locks pointing and bows strung with arrows in hand, and saw, too, it was no use to run, for they were too many and too close. Then I thought of family and parents, especially of father in the camp now near, and I pictured my bones bleaching on the plains; and then, while my old felt hat was moving or seeming to move on my head, I concluded the best way was to bluff, and accordingly I bluffed by standing up and steeling my knife, and then stooping to continue the skinning of the cow. It seemed a long time, though really but a minute or two, when they were all around me. Still I kept at work, momentarily expecting to



“ I bluffed by standing up and steeling my knife.” (Page 102.)



hear a gun go off or a flint-lock snap or a bow twang; but none coming, I straightened up. Knife in hand, gun gripped by my right foot, I now looked into the faces of those around me. In vain did I try to recognize any of them; they were strangers. Were they down-east Crees or Blackfeet? Which language should I use? Either might irritate them and bring matters to a climax. At last I could stand the strain no longer, so I spoke out in Cree, "What do you want?" and back in pure Plain Cree came the full accentuated "Nothing." Then I became bolder and ventured the query, "What did you run at me for in the way you did?" and now the spokesman answered, "Is this not our country, and can we not do what we like in it?" I said, "It is true, it is your country; but I am not your enemy. You could easily see that I was not a Blackfoot or 'outside man'" (the term used by the Crees for those not of themselves or allies). "Furthermore," I said, "it might have been that when you rushed I could have begun to shoot." Then, picking up my gun, I continued, "You saw me just now kill these buffalo. If I had shot at you I might have shot more than once, and you, of course, would have killed me, and I several of you, and then what? Why, in your camp your parents and wives and sweethearts would have wept and mourned, and



also my wife and family and parents and loved ones would have done the same for me; and more than this, the Great Spirit who made this beautiful country in which we meet, and who made you and me to be friends and brothers, would have been grieved and made sorry. I say, how foolish you were to risk all this by rashly running at me." Then the big fellow looked at me and asked, "Who are you to thus talk to us?" I told him where I came from, and who I was and my calling, and he then eagerly asked me if I was "John," and when I admitted this he took my hand and said, "I am thankful, John, that the Good Spirit did not permit us to kill you." Then turning to his following he said, "Shake hands, young men, with John; he is like one of ourselves; he is the Indians' friend. Come, John, let us sit down and you will tell us the news." So we sat down, and he asked me why I did not run when they charged. I told him that I knew very well that if I attempted to do so his young men would have shot me. I also told him that I came of a race of men who did not like to run from their foes. Then he asked, "What do you want to do with these buffalo?" and I answered that I wanted the robe of this one, but that he and his party might have the meat of both. "Well," he said, "the young men will skin it for you,

and we will be thankful for some of the meat, but the young men can fix up a load for your horse out of it. And then, while a few worked at the buffalo, the chief and party sat around me and I gave them my news. First came the local happenings; then I took them gently afield to other lands, and brought them up at length to the old, old story.

The sun was now almost down and I was becoming anxious as to what they would do about my horse and self, when to my delight, at a sign from the chief, a couple of young fellows saddled my horse, and having completely wiped the blood from the hide, lifted it up on him, also some of the choice pieces of meat, as they very well know how to string these for the saddle. Then the chief rose up and taking my hand said, "Again I want to say that the Great Spirit was most kind to us and you, John, in preventing the spilling of man's blood to-day. Tell your party not to fear that we will attempt to steal their horses; we are going far to the Blackfeet." I in turn expressed my gratitude, and hoped that the time would come when he and his people would go to war no more, and so we parted. I rode down the valley to my party and was indeed thankful for life and opportunity. But when I told "Old John" and the rest of our party of the proximity of these fellows they put

on a double guard for the night. I, however, enjoyed sound sleep, for I was very weary.

The next day, as the party moved on homeward, father and I took a pack-horse with us and went out across the creek, when he saw the camp of these fellows, which they evidently had left early in the morning. Going on I ran and killed two fine cows, and with our own saddle-horses and a pack-horse we brought most of the meat of these into camp that night. When running them, and just as I shot the first one and knocked her down, my horse also fell and threw me far forward, and as I held the gun, which was that day a double-barrelled shotgun, this struck the ground so hard as to break the ramrod keeper from the gun and smash the hardwood ramrod all to pieces. More than this, it jarred my hand and shoulders and dislocated my thumb. I was thrown near the cow, which now jumped up and started to run off, but as I got on to my knees I let her have the other barrel and down she dropped dead. Then I heard a "Well done!" from father, who sat his horse and held the pack animal while I ran, and who now came up to me. Then I noticed the condition of my hand, which was already much swollen. I hastily pulled my thumb back into joint, and fairly winced with the pain for some hours, nor did I get over the general shake-up for some

days. My hand was tender for years as the result of that fall. However, I killed another cow, and, as stated, we brought the meat home to camp. Our carts, already well loaded, would still take a little more; moreover, our daily consumption was not a little.

It was well on into October when we were safe across the Saskatchewan, our provisions in storehouse, and we a thankful community. I then went over to White Fish Lake, where I found my wife and children all well, and bringing them to Victoria, commenced to fix up a home for the winter.

## CHAPTER VII.

Visiting Hudson's Bay posts—A lonely journey—I encounter a solitary traveller—Importation of liquor—Circulating a petition—An Irish priest's objections—Governor Archibald's proclamation—Prohibition in the Territories.

EARLY in the winter I made a trip to the Rocky Mountain House, visiting Stoney and Cree camps *en route*, and also finding a goodly number of people at the fort. These visits to the wandering camps and isolated Hudson's Bay posts were much appreciated; they were events in the life of the people. Many were the questions asked us. We never assumed knowledge that we did not possess; what we knew we told, and a large measure of confidence which became mutual was thus created. Both going and coming on this trip I called at Pigeon Lake. Reaching this point on the return journey, my Indian boy companion failed to show up. I was not surprised at this, however, for my hour of starting was three a.m., and at that hour a furious snow-storm was raging. I did not even wake up the household of the missionary, but went out alone, and all day into deep snow and trackless roads my



good dogs and self made our way to Edmonton. On our outward journey one of the dogs my boy was using had hurt his neck, and, the wound festering, we were obliged to leave the poor fellow to follow us up. On our arriving at Pigeon Lake the dog did not make an appearance, and the conclusion was that the wolves had caught him in his weak state and killed him. However, when we reached Edmonton, going out to feed my dogs, I was delighted to find this fellow with them, and took him with me the next morning. Here also I was doomed to a solitary journey. Again deep snow and no trail, but my noble fellows breasted it gallantly, and I followed on snowshoes. We camped east of Sturgeon River, in a dry clump of trees, and I unharnessed my dogs and began making my lonely camp. I say lonely, for I confess that I do not like to be altogether away from the rest of humanity. Down came the snow, the storm increasing with the night. The wind whistled and moaned and groaned and shrieked through the trees and woods, and one could imagine all sorts of sounds. I set to work vigorously clearing away snow and chopping wood and carrying it in for the night, and by and by had a good fire and a camp comfortable enough for the few hours I hoped to spend in it. I had fed my dogs and looked after poor Snap, the sick one, and a

lonesome feeling was settling upon me when I heard something like "whack, whack," coming with the north wind to my ears. I listened keenly and thought I heard chopping, and said to myself, "Here is someone about to camp short of me," so I put my supper away, and placing the tea-kettle closer to the fire started on the run through the deep snow to stay the benighted traveller, if I could, and invite him to my camp. I was running eagerly in anticipation of company when I heard a strange sound like "crunch, crunch," and then like silent ghosts in the thick darkness a train of dogs glided in and about my legs, almost tripping me up so quietly had they met me. If there were any bells on their harness the thickly falling snow had muffled them. I looked for some man to come in sight, but no one appeared, and as I stood and wondered, again came the strange "crunch, crunch" sound, and I peered into the dark, stormy night and listened intently. This was becoming mysterious, and now I saw something that sent my heart into my throat, for surely here was "the giant of all the ages." Looming into view there came a strange big creature which broke through the bottom of the dog-sleigh road, as also the light new snow, and with stately, heavy steps approached. But by this time I was behind a clump of willows (one bound had brought me

there), and thence I peered out to behold this wonderful creature that in colossal size so much surpassed anything I had ever seen. All at once it flashed upon my memory that I had overheard the storeman at Edmonton saying that they expected an ox up from Victória, and I began to think this must be the ox; but whoever saw so tall an ox as this? Then I recognized the figure of a man (who, by the way, was a big fellow) riding on the ox, and saw he had a buffalo robe belted around him; and as he had given me a strange, queer fright I thought it was my turn to startle him, which I did by giving a quick, sharp yell. This made the ox jump and throw the man into the snow, and then we recognized each other and were mutually glad, for he also was alone and had been reluctant to camp. The whacks I had heard were of his whip coming down on the robe and the ox's ribs. We exchanged news, sang a hymn and had prayer together, went to sleep, and at three o'clock next morning each went his way, and by evening I had made home and was no more lonesome.

About this time free trade was importing more intoxicating liquors than usual, and some deeds of lawlessness and violence occurred. In consequence an agitation was begun at Victoria looking to a petition, the same to be forwarded to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West

Territories (there being as yet no province of Manitoba), asking that the importation and traffic in intoxicants be stopped. The Hudson's Bay Company had discontinued their traffic in such in the interior for some years. Several meetings were held, the petition was drawn up, and I was asked to take it out to the camps and obtain the signatures of chiefs and leading men. The first large camp I came to was near Battle River, where I found the Indians in a state of excitement. They had had some fights with the Blackfeet and some horses had been stolen, and at the time of my visit they were exercising great care over both stock and camp. I remember saying to them that they were different from my people, for we would either make our enemies fight to the death or sue for peace, and if the latter it must be permanent. I further said, "You call this your country, but even now in the dead of winter you dare not sleep in quiet. No," said I, "not until a stronger power friendly to you comes upon the scene will you really own a bit of land and live at peace with other men." This gave me a text to explain the government of our country and English law and reserve life, and many of my audience expressed a longing for the coming of the same.

At the proper time I had all the chiefs and head men assemble, and read to them the peti-



tion; but while I was doing this, who should come in but the Irish priest, the Rev. Mr. Scollen, who asked me for the petition, and having read it made a violent attack upon it. He wound up his harangue by telling the assembled Indians that it would be impudence and out of place for them to sign it, that the Government would not listen to any such arrangement, and that he hoped they would not make fools of themselves by having anything to do with it. This gave me my opportunity and I took it. I explained the lawless and ungoverned condition of the country, and warned them that the cupidity of the reckless and bad white men would bring to pass here in our fair Saskatchewan what was now going on south of us near the border, and that this petition was to save trouble and life. In my turn I closed by hoping they would show their wisdom and prudence by signing this petition even to a man.

Then a leading Roman Catholic, an old man of wide influence, took the floor and backed me up strongly. He expressed pain and surprise at the stand that his priest had taken, and eulogized me as the true friend of the Indian, expressing the desire that his should be the first name on the petition from that camp. Down went his name, and all followed his example,



whereupon the priest, calling us all fools, retired to his lodge.

The whole Indian and half-breed population, and indeed practically all the whites as well, joined with us, and Lieutenant-Governor Archibald gave us a proclamation which enacted total prohibition in our western country. And as this was the general feeling, the law was most religiously observed, so that for a time we had profound peace from the trouble and sorrow caused by intoxicating drink.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Rebellion in the Red River Settlement—Riel seizes Fort Garry—Attempts to induce the Indians to revolt—Visiting the tribes to preach loyalty—Indians remain firm—Outbreak of smallpox—Massacre of Blackfeet near Edmonton—The Post invested by avenging force—Narrow escape of a party of whites—A bonfire of carts and a feast—Wolseley crushes rebellion—Terrible ravages of smallpox—Heartrending scenes—The writer's attack and cure—Awful mortality among French half-breeds.

WITH the New Year there came to us, by way of rumor passed from camp to camp, the strange news that there was serious trouble in the Red River Settlement. Mysterious messages came to the leading Indians, tobacco to be smoked, and a cause to be joined which promised wonderful things in the near future. Then it became known that Riel and the French half-breeds and their sympathizers in the Red River had taken Fort Garry. The native tribes were called upon to join them or suffer in their turn, and I was sent out from camp to camp to counteract as much as possible this influence. The large gatherings of Indians during January, February and March of 1870 were at the last points of timber around Calling Lake, and it took long

journeys to reach them. Moreover, the winter was a very stormy one, with the roads always full and largely non-existent. I had good dogs, and was always a welcome companion to the Hudson's Bay Company and free traders in their travelling and trading parties passing to and fro. Many a hundred miles did I break the roads for such that winter, and they in turn gave me companionship and great respect and help when needed. Then I would stop for days alone with the Indians, going from lodge to lodge attending councils, and, when I could, holding meetings and giving lectures, which you may be sure were at the time packed full of English history and Canadian experience and fair play, justice and liberty. Such men as Sweet Grass, Pakan, Little Hunter Who Frightens Them, Bob Tail, Big Bear, and a host of their contemporaries were my auditors and my companions. I slept in their lodges, ate with them, and became a friend in whom I verily believe they came to have confidence, for they did not smoke rebellion tobacco and did not budge under the torrent of falsehood and deception which was poured into their ears by interested parties. I am sorry to say there were rebels in the Saskatchewan, but they were not Indians nor yet half-breeds, but men who, while living under the British flag, and enjoying the largest measure of

liberty under the same, were and are always disloyal to Britain. The hated English Government was talked about, but during 1870 none of the Indians or half-breeds of the farther west listened to such talk.

Towards spring we heard more definitely about Riel's sojourn in Fort Garry, and also that the Canadian Government was organizing an expedition against him. Of the issue of this we had no doubt, and loudly we sounded our faith in the ears of all the people. In the meantime we were extremely anxious. Around us were firebrands, and intensely inflammable material was to be found in every camp and settlement. Then the problem stared us in the face, where were we to obtain supplies for the coming year, the clothing and ammunition so necessary, to say nothing about groceries and simple luxuries? And then, how long could we counteract the influences of rebellion with its license of loot and plunder? I can assure my readers, as the spring of 1870 opened there were some anxious souls in the great West. To add to this there came rumors of some fell disease to the south of us. It was said that the Indians beyond the border were dying by the hundreds. Smallpox was mentioned, and we shuddered at the sound, for we were a thousand miles from a medical man and without medicine. Worse still, we

were without law and in the midst of an ignorant, excitable people. The chief magistrate or chief factor, Wm. J. Christie, Esq., and father had many a consultation on the state of affairs. One proposition was to open up communication with the States by way of Fort Bent, but for some reason this was not done, and after a hard winter of travel and camp life, most of it distant from home so far as I was concerned, spring came and with it an intensifying of war and disease rumors.

One day Lawrence Clark, of Fort Carlton, a Hudson's Bay officer, came along and told us of the killing of Scott by Riel, and the possibilities of more such acts to follow. How long would the Indians near us hold out? That was the question. They were being worked hard. Would they yield? We exalted the Government, we decried rebellion, we pooh-poohed the idea of Riel and his friends holding out very long. We said, "Hold on even until midsummer and see," and I am thankful that the people even to a man did hold on to loyalty and reason. Father accompanied Mr. Clark on to Edmonton, but they were headed off by local war up there. The Blackfeet were on the scene. During March a few Blackfeet, believing the most of the Crees were out on the plains and farther east, came into Edmonton to trade, and when



leaving they were ambushed at the top of the Southern River, where a most brutal massacre took place. A fellow, Tak-kooch by name, had feasted and danced with them at the fort, and then he had organized his following and arranged his plans, and the result was much blood. This was in revenge for the killing of Maskepetoon, and also for many crimes on the part of the Blackfeet.

When the few who escaped reached the Blackfoot camp there was hasty preparation, and a large party of warriors, several hundreds in number, came in to have their turn at revenge. However, it so happened that the Hudson's Bay Company's post-master at Pigeon Lake and my brother David, who also had a small branch post at the same place, were now on their way to Edmonton and Victoria. The Rev. Peter Campbell was also in the party, and, as it occurred, these just about timed with the Blackfeet on the south bank of the river, nearly opposite the fort. Fortunately some one gave the alarm, and the most of the party, including the women and children, managed to escape across the river and reach the shelter of the fort. So hurried was their flight that they had to leave all their belongings on the south bank. My brother and my friend Samson wanted to organize and meet the Blackfeet at the top of the hill and send

them back on the jump, which no doubt would have been the result of such tactics, though some killing would of necessity have been the consequence. But the gentleman in charge of the fort resolutely shut the gates and would not consent to such a move; so David, with Samson, who stayed with him, crossed what stuff they could, and when the war-party came out in full force at the river they were climbing the steep banks before the fort gates with the best packs of furs to serve as shields when the bullets came. Come the bullets did, fast and furious, but as the guns were inferior and the distance considerable no one was hurt. And now that the Blackfeet took none by surprise and the fort was shut, they turned their attention to the carts that were beside them, which were full of goods and leather and furs and provisions. Here was a genuine windfall to these warriors; clothing and blankets, prints and shirts, and all manner of good articles, as well as pemmican and dried meat and tea and sugar. Settling down beside these good things they spent the night, every now and then firing a fresh fusilade at the fort, but doing no harm. They made a bonfire of the carts and divided the spoils, and they kept up a racket all night, and doubtless in their own style and to their own tune sang most lustily, "We won't go home till morning," and then

went, for the next day found them a minus quantity near Edmonton.

It was on the night of this occurrence that Mr. Clark and father were approaching the fort, and hearing the constant shooting, and not knowing what it might mean, wisely took cover until the next morning, when, scouting in, they found the fort all right, but still in a state of excitement over the raid. With rebellion at headquarters, which also was the base of supplies, tribal war around us and the fearful scourge of smallpox in sight, truly the whole Saskatchewan country was in a bad state at this time, and for all this there seemed to be no prospect of immediate relief. No government, no protection, no board of health, no doctors, no medicine—certainly under God we were completely thrown on our own resources. Nevertheless, we were hopeful, and at once began to plan. The Chief Factor went to Fort Garry to watch events, and if possible to obtain supplies and forward these west. Father also went east and joined the Rev. George Young in the little village of Winnipeg, where he could follow events. He also was anxious about supplies and friends who might be coming west at that time. Father told me that after reaching the Red River and sizing up Riel and his troops in Fort Garry, he would have been delighted to be one of twenty

men to go in and run the whole party out, but there were no men to respond. Word that Col. Wolseley and the volunteers were coming kept up the hopes of the loyal, and also acted upon the Riel faction so as to keep them passive. In quiet these kept the fort, in quiet the balance of the country awaited developments, and in due time the developments came. When the troops reached Fort Garry and found it evacuated, any one asking for the Riel rebellion would have met the echo, "Where?" It was gone, had suddenly atomized and entirely disappeared. All now were loyal; the mere mention of rebellion thenceforth would hurt feelings, and so on.

In the greater West we had kept the huge farce out from any actual flame, but as weeks went by we were menaced by woeful disease. Horrible tales of whole camps being dead and the epidemic growing in virulence came in to us from the south. Father had said to me with strong emphasis, "Scatter them, scatter them; do all you can to scatter the people, John, for that is the only hope of saving them." In the meantime, acting on this, we encouraged our settlers at Victoria to move on to the plains early in the season, or to go out to the lakes north of us; and with only four men at the Hudson's Bay post, and a young Indian lad, Job, and myself at the Mission, we kept down the plague and were on guard day and night.

Anxious and careful, and sometimes exceedingly fearful, the early summer of 1870 found us at Victoria, on the north bank of the Saskatchewan, with the people belonging to the settlements scattered, father far distant, no actual definite word from Fort Garry, rumors rife, smallpox drawing nearer, and small war-parties around us. Why the latter did not attack I cannot tell. Of course, we were always ready; a gun, such as it was, at every window; an axe behind every door; mother and sisters and wife drilled to load and handle guns; Job and I on guard all night, and so far as myself was concerned, never really asleep at any time. The Blackfeet shot our cattle and stole our horses, but did not attack us. Many a time during those weary nights and days I wished they would, and let us have it out to a finish, but still the waiting and watching went on.

One day a messenger came from Edmonton on horseback bringing a letter from the Rev. Peter Campbell, asking me to send him by the bearer some sugar that he had stored in our provision shed, also inquiring very kindly about "our friends, the northern Ishmaelites." That night the Blackfeet stole fourteen horses, Mr. Campbell's being the fourteenth, and his horse we found a few miles down the river, stabbed to death, the thieves evidently having quarrelled



over the spoils. So I sent his man back on foot, and after writing Mr. Campbell a good long letter on matters in general, I put in a postscript telling him my reason for not sending him his sugar was that his friends, "the northern Ishmaelites," were not dead nor yet sleeping; that they had visited us the night before and had stolen our horses and his also, but had killed his, doubtless having recognized their friend's animal.

Such were the existing conditions when some of our half-breed population came in hurriedly from the plains, fleeing from the approaching smallpox. The tales these brought were alarming, and we felt the coming of the disease to us was inevitable. The Wood Crees would come in without fail, and as many of their young men had gone south on the warpath, the infection must come north. By leaps and bounds the destroyer came on, from Sioux and Grovount and Crow to Piegan and Blood and Blackfoot and Sarcee, and from these to their hereditary foes, the Mountain and Wood Stoneys. We did as instructed. We scattered these half-breeds, we closed our church services and took every precaution, but soon in came the large camps, and already the disease was well spread. We continued to urge isolation, and as many as listened almost to a man escaped. But there were many

who were now diseased, and others who would not budge, and others extreme fatalists, and in a few days we were surrounded by disease. The sick and dying and dead were everywhere in our vicinity ; however, our isolation cry saved many, and the deaths around us were few compared with the settlements and camps east and west and south of us.

In the vicinity of St. Paul, where the Rev. Mr. Lacombe was starting a mission, there was great mortality. It seemed strange that all through the country the Roman Catholic priests encouraged the people to congregate and gather into large camps, and because we did our best to isolate them the argument used by the priests was that we were personally afraid of the disease. "Come to us and we will save you" was the language of a leading priest to some of our people whom we had succeeded in sending off by themselves, but one of the head men answered that they knew of one Saviour only, and He was Jesus Christ. I firmly believe that hundreds of poor deluded folk became the victims of the congregating of the infected. The disease quickly assumed a most virulent form and became most deadly. Right out in full view of our dining-room windows was a camp in which all had died save one son, a young man, and the father. This son was now dying, and the poor

father, heart-broken but assiduous in his attentions, was doing all he could for his boy. Presently the young man died, and the father rushed up to me for a bit of cotton or a shirt to bury him in. Rummaging among my things I brought out an old shirt, which the sorrow-stricken man seized and ran down to dress his son's corpse in. I sat down to dinner, and as I ate watched him. Having laid his boy out, he raised himself up, gave a leap, and himself fell down dead. I ran to him to make sure, and then came back to finish my dinner, and presently found myself with a feeling of shame at my hard-heartedness. The fact was we became accustomed to death and to scenes of sorrow and fearful destitution.

Coming home one morning from a death peculiarly harrowing, I felt the grip of the disease, and had to lean up against the fence several times before I could reach home. Going into the house I asked mother and my wife to have our room emptied of everything, and then asked for a tub of hot water and a double dose of Dover's powder. Having taken the powder and got into the tub of hot water, I presently slid into bed under plenty of clothing, and from excruciating pain went off into a profuse perspiration, which gave me relief. The pain in my back was almost unbearable for a time, but the simple remedies did good in my case, and the

next day I was again out amongst my patients. A grand old man, Thomas Woolsey or Red Bank by name, was dying in a little brush hut. All alone I found him, and we sang his favorite hymn. His voice quavered in weakness and mine in sorrow, but our faith was strong, and the good man said, "I am going on, John; it is all right. My body is corrupt and will soon decay, but my spirit is young and strong, and Jesus will take me home." As I stood there beside the bent leaves of the fluttering willows in the shade of which my friend lay dying, his body terrible to behold in its premature corruption, and listened to his clear, emphatic testimony to the comfort and assurance and triumph of faith in Jesus Christ, my own heart was made strong in this blessed gospel. How often during these days did I long for father's company. Some of the Indians were very sullen, and at times most insolent; they went about armed to the teeth, and were ready for any excuse to commit violence. This was a white man's disease, and they hated the whites. We were living all the time on the thin crust of a volcano; we felt it in the air, we met it on the path, it was stamped on the faces of both men and women with whom in past times we had been on the most friendly terms. The strain was continuous, disease and death and danger con-

stant. I often think of the true heroism of my mother at this time. She worked on, perfectly conscious of all the danger, but making no fuss, no noise. To me her conduct was sublime, and my wife and sisters all did their part. We had no scenes; each felt that work and duty were now in place. One day in midsummer, or a little later, a traveller came along going east, and he waited while I wrote a note to father to hurry him up if possible. While writing I heard the neigh of a horse, and recognized it as that of Little Bob No. 2, and running out, there was father. Oh, how glad I and the others were! He had with him Mr. Hardisty and my sister, also another sister who had come from Ontario. Having gone away a little girl, she now came back to us in the full bloom of young womanhood. More possible victims of either disease or massacre was the silent thought of some of us, and yet we were delighted to see our loved ones again, and took hold with fresh grip to stand off mishap or evil of any kind. Father's coming was as a breath of strength and security to many; his experience and strong individuality seemed as a refuge unto which one might run and be comforted. He gave us the first real intelligence of the arrival of the troops and the establishing of law and government in the Red River Settlement. He worked



almost night and day in the camps around us, and many a poor heart took hold on both material and spiritual life because of his help and cheer. To me his coming was indeed a heaven-send, for within a few days of his arrival, because of undue exposure, I was taken down with inflammation of the lungs, and father dosed and nursed me back to life. As a Western man would say, "it was a close call," but God and father and wife and mother raised me up again. It took three years to bring me back to my wonted strength, yet I was again at work within the month. From every direction came the reports of disease and many deaths. At Moose Lake, east of us, a whole settlement died, and when the spot was silently approached by a lone traveller, the one survivor, a little boy, fled from out of the unburied dead, and it took considerable search and craft to catch this child and allay his fears and save him. Up the river between us and Edmonton another camp of some fifty souls lay down and died, and but two children survived. I knew all of these and had lived amongst them at Pigeon Lake and on the plains, but in a few days, nay, in a few hours, from strength and cunning and human might and skill, of which in large measure they were possessed, they fell before this terrible disease which was now sweeping over our fair country.

At Big Lake, now St. Albert, right alongside the largest Roman Catholic mission in the West, with bishop and many priests and brothers and sisters and nuns, the French half-breeds were cut down to less than half their number, three hundred and twenty dying in a short time. Along the mountains some of our Mountain Stoneys persisted in entering a Piegan camp, and bringing home the infection, spread it among their people. These all too late started north, and all along the valleys between Old Mans and the Bow left their dead. From where Morley now is, on both sides of the Bow, up to where Banff is situated, as one Stoney said to me, "it was a graveyard, and the crying went up both day and night." From the best information we could obtain it was reasonable to estimate that fully half of the native tribes perished during the season of 1870 through the ravages of smallpox. If it were true that this foul disease was purposely brought among the Indians by revengeful white men (as was reported), then this brutal act accomplished its devilish end, but oh, the suffering and misery of it all! And in the meantime war went on and intensified the trouble. Day and night we had to watch, and so the summer passed with a dark cloud of death and sorrow covering one of the fairest countries in the world, "where every prospect pleases and only man is vile."

## CHAPTER IX.

An autumn hunt—Spirit of the pioneer—My friend Susa gets a bath—Our camp entered by a war-party—My brother David's pluck—Best meat in the world—Homeward with loaded carts—We get serious word from the Mission—Father and sisters down with smallpox—A camp of the dead—Arrive at the Mission—Find father recovering—Strict quarantine—Into an ice-hole—Narrow escape from drowning—Mother's heroism in fighting the scourge.

IN the autumn we organized a party to visit the plains for the purpose of making provisions. There may have been from forty to fifty families in our company, and with us went my brother David and some men with an outfit of carts. The whole settlement was interested in our success, as the winter supply of food largely depended upon this move. We were to find buffalo, make provisions out of same, but, above all things, to keep infection, if possible, from our camp. Father said to me, "Don't let the smallpox into your camp, John; if need be, keep it out at the mouth of the gun." There being no law, we had to become a law unto ourselves. Accordingly we organized our party and crossed the big Saskatchewan, and turned our faces south-

wards to the plains. Father and Mr. Tait, the Hudson's Bay Company's officer in charge at Victoria, and my youngest sister, Flora, accompanied us on the first stage of the journey, and spent the Sabbath in our camp. Those were times when men gripped each other's hands at parting with the feeling that it might be for the last time on earth, and yet this was done with a laugh and a cheer; such is the stuff of which the hardy pioneer is made. If he were not all full of optimism he could not exist; this life demands hope and faith, and only those surcharged with these qualities make true pioneers.

Scouts are sent out in advance and on either flank all day as we move, a full guard is posted at night, and all stock of any value gathered in the corral made by our carts and waggons. These also are encircled in turn by our buffalo-skin lodges. Thus we travelled out across the head-waters of the Vermilion, in sight of Sickness Hill and Birch Lake, on across the Battle River and east of the Nose Hill, and not until many days had elapsed did we find buffalo. Finding these we also found Indians, and it was not without some difficulty that we kept the latter out of our camp. The older and more reasonable acquiesced, but the young warriors were bound to come in, and we had to make

them stay out. All this caused us a lot of trouble and constant need of extra caution.

One day an outrider brought me word of seeing an old friend of mine away to one side of our line of march, who was in great trouble and who earnestly desired to see "John." Galloping back in the direction my informant indicated, I found Susa, whom I had known for years, in a terrible condition of mind and body. He was attired in old-time mourning, a filthy robe belted around the waist, and, with the exception of a worn pair of moccasins and breech-cloth, this was all poor Susa had on. His story briefly was: "I am alone, my wife and children and friends are dead." A fine-looking, motherly woman, as I had seen her last, and several beautiful children all gone, camp broken up, and Susa with his one pony as I saw him was all that was left. I condoled with him, and then asked him if he would like to come with me. At this he jumped eagerly, so I sent him to the shore of a lake near our trail, and then went into camp and rummaged a pair of trousers and a shirt and blanket from our little store, and with these and a can of soft soap I returned to Susa. I had him strip off his filthy attire, and with gun and horse go into the lake, and with a plentiful use of soap made him wash and clean not only himself, but horse and gun as well. I kept



him in the water a long time, made him swim his horse into the depths, and meanwhile made a fire on the shore and burnt his robe, line, saddle, etc., and then, re-clothing him, took my friend into my own tent. He in turn became hunter and scout and guard and servant and friend. Many a run we had together, and once it came near being Susa's last run, for just as we came up to the buffalo and he was about to pull his old flint-lock, his horse went down and the gun went off, grazing the horse's head and singeing the hair from the side of his own face. Susa pitched on to his head in such a manner that for a little we feared his neck was broken, but presently he came to and after a few days was himself again.

All this trip we had the buffalo in small lots, and only by having good horses and with extra skill did we secure meat. However, the work of making provisions steadily went on, and the cold weather came on also, sometimes in good big samples, and when one is a hundred or two miles away from timber it becomes a serious matter. One evening, coming into camp in advance of our hunting party, I found the camp in a state of excitement, being outnumbered by a war-party of Plain Crees who were already within our corral and in the shelter of the carts, and who without so much as "by your leave"

had taken of the wood from our carts and had made a big fire. I stopped their taking any more wood and expostulated with them as to making a fire within our corral, but not knowing who were behind me, they were quite impudent. However, in a little while in came our crowd, and it was a surprise to these sons of the plain when my brother David jumped from his horse into their midst and kicked in every direction the fire around which they were sitting, and pulling the logs out of the blaze flung them into the frosted grass to smoulder and go out. With rifle in hand he asked them by what right had they thus touched what was not their own. Seeing the stern faces of our party, these high-strung warriors meekly enough pleaded guilty, and then it was my part to step in and tell them we had a spare lodge, large and roomy, and would lend them poles and give them some wood and meat, and if they quietly behaved themselves during the night we would let them go next morning, but we would not let them enter our tents nor visit in our camps. If they did not wish to accept this they might move on right now. It being a bitterly cold night they were glad to accept what I offered, and our party put on a double guard and a special watch over these unwelcome guests. Early next morning they were on their way, and we broke camp

and moved farther afield. A day or two afterwards another party attempted to come into our camp, but we met them some distance out and forbade their doing so, and I explained our reasons for thus acting. We did not wish to quarrel with them, but we did not purpose running any risk from infection. They had gone forth from infected camps, and into infected country, and doubtless had stolen infected horses, and we would not let them enter our camp. While I was talking to the crowd I noticed two young braves steal away on the one horse towards our camp. Presently they were on the jump, when I told my brother and one Charles Whitford to bring them back either dead or alive, and in a few minutes Dave had his gun poking into the faces of both, and he and Charles rounded the scamps up and brought them into the camp in short order. I then told the party it was no use discussing this matter. We did not seek a quarrel with them, but we were in dead earnest, so they had better go on; and on they went. Time and time again we had thus to do with these parties who through the years had been our own allies, but now in the presence of the greater enemy, the smallpox, we, because of our families and also carrying out our instructions, had to refuse any relations with them. So, carefully camping always on new ground

and scouting in advance, we moved on and out and up even to the Hand Hills, on the bank of the Red Deer, and all the while were falling in with small herds of buffalo and loading up our carts and waggons with dried meat, pemmican, etc. And such dried meat as the flesh of those cows made! Even as I write, my mouth waters for some of it. Never did we wish for bread or vegetables or anything else in the way of food when we had such dried meat as was made in the autumn hunts of the period I am describing. The suns and rains of centuries had produced wonderful grasses, which in turn had produced a quality of meat which from our standpoint had never been surpassed, perhaps never equalled.

As we circled westward and north toward the timber, for every day admonished us that winter was near, there came to view a scene I have never forgotten. We were on the high lands between Battle River and Red Deer, and about south-east of Buffalo Lake, when the weather cleared and the sky and atmosphere became wonderfully transparent, and presently the mountains appeared in view. We were fully two hundred miles away from them, and yet they seemed near, and I would judge that two hundred miles of the range was in sight. Most gorgeous was the vision, and many were the

exclamations of delight and wonder from our party. While almost all were natives, yet many had never seen the mountains until that time. Again I thought of the wonderful future there must be in store for this country through which we were now travelling.

And now our carts were creaking with their loads. Providence had smiled upon us; our party was intact; there was no infection in our camp, and with thankful hearts we began our journey northward and homeward. It behooved us to still continue to avoid both living and dead objects of infection. Remember, we had no doctor, nor yet any medicine to speak of; we had no government to come to the rescue; we were entirely dependent on Providence and on local and very simple and humble remedies. Several cold storms began to hurry us timberwards. One day we nooned at the bend of the Battle River. All this time no word from the Mission or forts in the north had come to us, though two months and better had elapsed, but as we pulled up the northern side of the valley of the river towards Flag Hill, we discovered people away east of us, and hoping these might have news of our friends, a few of our party on horseback bore down on them. They, seeing us coming, formed their carts into a barricade, and fastening their horses came out to meet and



stop our charge, for these men at once concluded we were enemies. However, as we approached each other we found they were our friends from Victoria now out on a fresh meat hunt. From these we heard the sad news that the smallpox was in the Mission house, and that two of our sisters were dead and buried and others of the Mission supposed to be dying when this party left; that father had quarantined himself and family from the inside of the stockade and forbade any one to approach the place. These sorrowful tidings quite upset us for the moment, but at once we began to plan to help if possible, and galloping back to our party my brother and Susa started at once with relays of horses to go to father's assistance; they, having had the smallpox, might be considered immune. By travelling night and day it would take them three days to reach the Mission.

Slowly and like a funeral procession our string of carts and waggons wound up the valley that afternoon. All were quiet, for all were sad. We had hoped when we left the settlement that the worst was over, but now the disease is still awaiting us. Perhaps others by this time were dead, for many days had intervened since our informants had started out. Loved ones whom we had left in youth's bloom

and beauty had succumbed to the loathsome disease. One of my little daughters was with her grandparents in this quarantined and, humanly speaking, almost helpless home. How I longed to gallop in with my brother and faithful Susa, but my instructions were, "Keep with your people; save that camp from infection," and I dare not yet leave my post of duty. To break the weight of sorrow on my heart I rode up to "Old John," who with rifle in hand was leading the party, and asked where he intended to camp that night; and he, divining my need, said, "On the ridge yonder is a fine little lake. If not already occupied, there is where I want to camp to-night, but you had better ride on carefully and scout." Action was what I needed, and away on up the gentle slopes of the long climb I galloped, keeping a sharp lookout for signs of human presence. David and Susa had already passed to the east of our course, therefore I did not very much dread that side, and keeping a little westerly presently I found tracks of horses and people, not very fresh, yet sufficiently new to make me careful. Then I saw flights of carrion birds, and again I met troops of wolves, and I said, "It is either an abandoned pound or a death camp," and soon I saw the waving earflaps of many lodges. Were all dead or were there any still living? Keep-

ing under cover and well to the windward I scouted nearer and nearer, and as I approached, a desolate and awful scene met my view. This camp of some forty lodges had been stricken with the dread scourge, and the few survivors had taken the horses of the camp and fled; but the mass was here before me, putrid and decayed. I saw that they were either Sarcees or Blackfeet—certainly not Crees, the lodges and travois and saddles being clear indications of this. There they lay in the lodges and outside of them, and the wolves and carrion birds and all manner of wild animals were feasting on human flesh. Of course, for the time being I forgot my own woe in the presence of this great multiplication of woes, and as I sat on my horse and looked upon this fearful scene the tragedy and pathos of it grew upon me. Old men and little children, nursing mothers and suckling babes, the wild, arrogant, impudent warrior, and the gentle native man were all here under the same lash. Having seen all that was necessary in the case, but sufficient to make it impossible for us to camp anywhere near the lake where John had planned, I rode back and reported; then making a big detour to windward, we travelled late into the night to another watering place.

With our heavy loads and heavier hearts the

days seemed short and the distance long, but we kept steadily at it, and while watchful and careful and constantly busy, still our thoughts often wandered ahead to the Mission and to our loved ones there. By this time the smaller lakes and creeks were frozen over, and on the hard ground our progress became slower, for if we travelled fast our cart breakage increased and caused more delay. When within some forty-five or fifty miles of the Saskatchewan we met an Indian called "Rabbit," who had just come from the Mission. He told us that another of my sisters was dead, and that father was said to be dying. Hearing this I at once arranged to leave my party and ride on. I took two horses and kept on the steady jump, or as fast as unshod horses could go over frozen, slippery ground. It was coming dusk when I rode down the hill to the river's brink. Almost at once I was seen by my watchful brother-in-law, Hardisty, who ran down with some poles to try the ice on the river, which had but now made fast, and as yet had not been crossed over. With the skill and caution of experience he succeeded by a very circuitous route in reaching my side. We gripped hands as those do who, coming out of big risks, again meet and are unspeakably thankful. The first question was, "How is father?" and with joy I heard the answer, "He is better, he is re-

covering; I have just come from speaking to him. He has already seen you and is thankful." I tethered my horses in as good a place as I could find for them and crossed with Hardisty, who went on to the Hudson's Bay fort to tell my sister and others of my arrival and of the welfare and success of my party, for all were very anxious concerning us. David and Susa had at once gone into quarantine, for father had kept this up most rigidly, and there had been little communication with them.

Telling Hardisty I would be over for the night, I walked on up to the Mission stockade, and as I approached the place some one spoke out of the darkness, "Is that you, John?" I at once recognized father's voice, though it was much weakened by disease. "Yes, father," I answered. "Thank God" came back the quick response, and then the command, "Come no nearer," and for a few minutes in darkness and cold we exchanged experiences and, saying "Good-night," parted. I heard father's short, weak, staggering steps as he returned to the house, then took a look through the gloom to the spot in the garden where with a gentle wave of his hand he had said, "We laid them there," and then turned away on the run across to the fort to be welcomed by my sister and her husband and to once more camp for a night under



the shelter of shingles. Hardisty gave me the last eastern news, only two months old, but to me as fresh as this evening's *Telegram*. I in turn gave him some of our hunting and quarantine episodes, and then we slept.

The next day I succeeded in getting my horses across, and we virtually opened up traffic for the season with the other side of the river. Through the windows I saw mother and sisters and my own little girl, Ruth. David and Susa and I talked over the fence, and amongst us we planned to keep my party still in isolation. I was to return to them, but instead of coming in on the usual road, we were to take the west side of the Egg Lake Creek, and were to camp in the woods on the south side of the river opposite the Mission. There was to be no promiscuous intercourse until we were as sure as we could be that the disease was stamped out. Thus instructed I left on the second day and returned to my party and did as we had planned, for all saw the reasonableness of this and were only too willing to be thus guided. During the day the men that could be spared from guarding camp went across and worked on the houses and stables being made ready for occupancy when the time might come.

And now winter arrived in real earnest. As we hoped, the intense frost helped to cleanse the country of the disease germs, and thankfully we

noted that most of this disease had occurred practically out of doors in the fresh air. There were few houses to be disinfected, and Nature herself came to our rescue all over this big land, and the process of cleansing went on as the degree of frost went lower and the fresh canopy of snow fell upon the land. In twenty days it was thought prudent for all of those whose homes had not been entered by disease to return again to them. The lodges were now very cold, and the migration of nearly all my party took place. In the breaking up of camp my responsibility was removed, and once again I was a free man.

The Mission was all this time under strict quarantine. Father would allow no one in or out, but meanwhile was using every measure to induce disinfection. David and Susa and all the household were incessantly at work, burning and cleaning and scouring and making wholesome the old house, but still the pall of isolation was on the place. No meetings or gatherings of any kind were held. At a distance men hailed each other and passed on. One evening Hardisty and I were walking around the Mission stockade, and knowing full well what had gone on inside and about the place, suddenly we determined to break quarantine. Quietly in our moccasined feet we slipped into the

kitchen and on into the hall of the home. The inmates were in the dining-room at supper, and before they had noticed us we were beside them, and father gave in and let us have our way, and thus the break was made. What a joyful reunion of friends for months separated under most trying circumstances! The next day being Saturday, we organized a big game of shinty on the ice before the Mission, and announced meeting for Sunday in the church. Hardisty rode one way and I the other to bring the people together, and the satisfaction of all was sublime. The old and the young came to the game on Saturday afternoon, and all took sides, some on skates and others on foot. Away went the ball, and some one "swiped" it across the river under the towering and almost perpendicular bank which cast a deep shade over the ice, and in my rush after the ball I did not see the open hole and swift, silent current until too late. I sheered off, but only to cut through the thin ice, and in I went. I grabbed the stronger ice as I took the plunge feet foremost, and with most vigorous swimming with both legs and one hand I managed to keep from going under. I knew I could not hold out very long, but presently was aware that Hardisty, who had been at the other end of the field, was now stretched out on the ice and was

holding his shinty stick to me. This I gripped for life, and felt I was saved from present drowning. It was now my turn to take command, and I called to Charles Whitford to lie down and take Mr. Hardisty by the feet; then I shouted to others to take hold of Charles and pull us out, all of which was done in a minute. I ran off up to the house and changed my clothes, and was in the game again in a little while, but perhaps never in my many glimpses of the possibility of sudden death was I nearer the actual than that afternoon. Once under the ice no power on earth could have saved me. We marked that spot and religiously kept away from it during the rest of our play.

The next day, Sunday, was a great day in our history. With hearts and voices we sang the doxology, and the old, old story came new upon our ears and sympathies, and there was general rejoicing amongst all the people in the settlement. We mourned, but not as those without hope. Father had literally buried his own dead. David was with him at the last burial, and could not but give expression to his burden by saying, "Father, it's hard to bury our own dead." Many another one's dead had we handled that season; we were familiar with death, and yet the personal experience of it came hard. Mother had worked like a Trojan, had nursed and watched

and mourned up to the last, and then fell into a swoon and utterly collapsed, and for some time her life was despaired of. But now her vigorous constitution had prevailed and she was about again, to our great joy. In other parts of the country the disease still lingered, and it was thought not wise to travel for a time, so that Christmas and the New Year found us in the vicinity of Victoria. During these holidays we had special meetings and special games, and did what we could to break from out the cloud of woe and sorrow and trouble which had hung over us, in common with so many, during the past months.



## CHAPTER X.

Indians in sullen humor—Another hunt organized—A dubious Quaker—My fingers badly frozen—Apou and I in luck—My endurance is tried—A visit from the Chief Factor—I am sent on a difficult and dangerous mission—Indians gathering in a big camp—Rebellion being fomented—Packet brings news of Franco-Prussian war—A priest's superstitious folly and its results—New idea of prayer—Gifts of tobacco—Arrival at Hand Hills camp.

THE Indians were sullen and hungry, and kept to themselves all through the late autumn and winter of 1870 and 1871. During January we heard of a few buffalo inside of Battle River, around Flag Hill and Dust Flying Lake, and as our food was almost altogether buffalo provisions, it behooved us if possible to secure some fresh meat. To do this we organized a strong party, perhaps thirty-five or forty sleds in all. Some of us took both horses and dogs. The weather was cold and occasionally quite stormy, and the snow deep, but by changing the teams often we made good time. Our camps were in the open, usually in the lee of some island timber. We were in a hurry and meant business. Daylight found us on the march, and harnessing

horses and dogs before day dawn is cold work. At that time of day everything is cracking as well as your whip-lash, and you rub cheek or nose and clap your hands and think of big fires and breakfast later on.

When near Dust Flying Lake we sighted our first buffalo. It was cold and stormy, but we concluded to run—at least some of us, for in all parties you will find those who want every condition to be favorable before they will act. These are like the extreme Quaker who will not take the initiative until the Spirit prompts. Brother Woolsey was getting up in meeting and an old Quaker interjected, "Are thee quite sure, Friend Woolsey, that the Spirit is now moving thee to speak?" "Yes," answered the sturdy old Englishman, "and we Methodists are very thankful to have the Spirit for the asking." So some of our party that exceedingly cold day tried to dissuade us, but we caught up our runners, and saddling them rode forth into storm and cold, and presently were into the swirl of snow-cloud made by the flying buffalo. I shot two, and then pulling up saw that all my fingers were frozen right up into the palm of my hand. They rattled like bones, and I shoved them under the saddle-cloth on the back of my horse, who was covered with perspiration and anything but cold. Then as my fingers thawed out I

suffered agony, but I knew it was the only thing to do. As they melted I washed them in the snow, and again put them under the saddle-cloth. After much pain the circulation was established, and I went to work to skin and butcher my animals. Soon some of the party who had not been so successful as I came to help me to do the butchering, and before long the sleds came for the meat, and presently we were roasting portions of our hunt around the huge camp-fire and exchanging experiences in the run. Some had fallen, both horses and rider, into the drifts, and others could not get their guns to go off; it was altogether too cold for these primitive firearms. In three or four days we were pretty well loaded, but still wanting more to fill up our transport capacity, we left part to take care of camp, and taking sleds and runners went on out a few miles farther. About noon we saw a lot of bulls strung out for half a mile or more, and decided to run them. But while the rest of the party were watching the movements of the bulls, I saw a small herd of cows in a brush-fringed swamp near by. I felt quite sure that what I saw would turn out to be cows, yet kept my own counsel, and leaving the boys to bring on the sleighs we rode towards the game, which gathered up and began to move off. With us was a Wood Cree, Apou, an

old friend of mine. As the bulls bunched up I gave Apou a sign and he pulled up alongside of me. While we went thundering along, making the snow fly, I leaned over and said, "Do as I do." This with a look into each other's eyes was sufficient, and he nodded acquiescence. And now the bulls were running and it behooved us to follow, so I let go towards them, and Apou stayed with me. The rest of the hunters charged at once. I pulled my horse up a bit and let them fairly into the snow-cloud, and then I said, "Apou, come with me, we will run cows, you and I;" and now his face beamed with satisfaction, and into the brush and into the herd we pushed our steeds, and sure enough here were cows and yearlings and calves. Apou and I each killed two fine animals, plump and fat. The other hunters were astonished when our sleds came in with the prime cow's meat, but all I had to say to them was, "Where were your eyes? Do you not as yet know the difference between buffalo?" All of which immensely tickled Apou.

Remaining for the night on the scene of our hunt, we returned to camp the next day, and loading up, made a start for home, three of us with dog-trains going on in advance of the horses. Our sleds were very heavily loaded. I had the meat of a cow and the half of another

on my sleigh. There was practically no trail. We left the horse-sleds early in the morning, and long before noon I was about played out; my heavy sickness of last summer was still on me. In all my thousands of miles of hard travel I never was so near giving out as that morning. We were crossing a wide treeless plain, where there was no chance to stop and make a fire. My sled would upset, and each time I found myself weaker and felt I must lie down and die, but again and again I willed myself up and on. There was no chance to ride, none whatever. Slowly we crossed that awful plain, for so it seemed to me, but eventually we reached brush and made a fire, and an Indian companion said to me, "You are not well, you are almost done; just try my plan, take off your shoes and bathe your feet and legs in snow, and perhaps it will help you." I did as he said and a great change came over me; the tired feeling gave way to comfort, and by the time I had taken a cup of tea I was again fit for the road. Away we went, doing in less than three days what it took our horse-teams fully six days to do. Once more our storehouse was comparatively full of good meat, and we could save our pemmican and dried meat for the spring and summer work.

Soon after this winter hunt we were visited by the Chief Factor of the district and all the



Hudson's Bay officials, and the missionary staff from Victoria accompanied the Factor over to White Fish Lake. There must have been a dozen dog-teams. The mission or purpose of our trip was to preach loyalty, civilization and Christianity. If the camps to the south were brooding and planning disloyalty and insurrection, all the more reason we should make sure of those around our Mission and Hudson's Bay forts. Mr. Steinhauer received us right gladly, and meeting and lecture followed one another in quick turn. The Chief Factor presented these newly started gardeners and agriculturists with a plough, and offered to grind their grain at the Hudson's Bay mill at Edmonton (only one hundred and fifty miles distant!) for little cost. He also gave them a lecture on government and Christianity, which I was asked to take note of and reproduce in Cree, and I very well remember I was much elated when the Chief Factor said, as he thanked me, "You improved on my paper, John," and for one only ten years at the language I was very much complimented.

This trip and these meetings, which were crowded from first to last, did a lot of good and solidified the people of White Fish Lake and Victoria in loyalty and ardent desire for peace. This was very timely work, for strong efforts were even then going on to produce a period of

war and frontier trouble. Indeed, the Chief Factor had barely reached Edmonton when he again returned to Victoria and was closeted with father for some hours. Both then came over to where I was wintering and asked me if I was willing to go on a difficult and dangerous trip for the purpose of upsetting the plans of the enemy, and also of winning back, if I could, the respect and friendship of the large camps. The Chief Factor said that reliable word had come to him that the Indians were gathering near the Hand Hills, on the Red Deer, and dark councils were common. Evidently they meant mischief, and by my going out now I might be able to frustrate much evil. I told father that if he said "Go," I would do so, and he said, "Go, and God go with you, my son," and the Chief Factor said, "Amen." This was about three p.m. The Chief Factor said, "There is no time to be lost. I will start at once, and will look for you, John, to catch me to-night;" and away he went with his two sleds of picked dogs and drivers.

The Chief Factor had said to me, "You can pick your own men to accompany you," and I named two from Victoria as my choice. These he took with him, and after making preparation, and with much affectionate farewelling on the part of loved ones and friends, I followed about nine p.m., and at midnight came up to their

camp, when I found the Chief Factor waiting up for me, and right glad he seemed to have me with him. He made me supper and waited on me himself, and even helped to feed my dogs, so satisfied was he with our action. After a short sleep of a couple of hours we were up and away into darkness and storm. Having the best dogs I took the lead. On we went through drift and deepening snow, until, some time after daylight, looking back, I saw some one waving to me, and pulling up in the lee of a bluff I waited, and here was one of the Chief Factor's crack dog-teams and drivers with a light sled, the load having been taken off on purpose that he might push ahead and catch and stop me so that we might have a combination meal of breakfast and lunch, for I had driven so fast and so long that the next run would bring us into Edmonton. We cleared away the snow and cut brush and made a fire, and still the rest came not, but by and by they hove in sight; then, coming up, the Chief Factor gently scolded me for keeping him and the rest of the party out of breakfast for so long a time. This was Saturday, and early in the afternoon we made Edmonton.

I forgot to say that after the Chief Factor left Victoria, the previous day, the February packet came in from Fort Garry, and I had brought it on; thus we were doubly welcome to Edmonton

folk. However, the Chief Factor paid little heed to the packet, but immediately took me to his private office and asked me what kind of outfit I wanted. I told him I wanted another man, now living at St. Albert, and he said he should be sent for at once. Then he made out a list of tobacco and tea and sugar, and I put ammunition on to this, but he said, "No." I said, "Yes, I must have powder, ball, gun-flints, and gun-worms." The Chief Factor said, "No, sir." Then we had a hot time for a little while, and I settled it by saying I would not go a step on the trip without them, and he gave in and told me to take anything I wanted. So we made out the list for four dog-sleds, with three-quarter loads for each. Besides the men's and dogs' provisions, there were ammunition, tobacco, tea and sugar, and some gun-flints and gun-worms. The whole lot was got out of stores that night and tied on to our sleds. Then in came my third man, John Rowland, and we were ready to start, which we did bright and early Monday morning, with all the inhabitants of the fort up to see us off. The old Chief Factor was quite affected when he grasped my hand at parting, and I began to think that perhaps there was some risk and danger in our trip. I saw my men turn quite solemn over it, but the faithful fellows were willing and obedient.

Away we went, up the long hill and out on the Hay Lake trail, and over the Bonny Knoll, where during the last season a strange scene for these days and times was enacted and Christianity terribly discounted by one of its exponents. A camp of French half-breeds was caught here by the smallpox. Many lay in weakness and death's grip, when suddenly a fire was seen approaching. "Never fear," said the priest, "I will go and meet it and stop its course," and the simple people believed him, so confident was their spiritual guide. Ammunition and powder-horns and camp equipage, carts and saddles, etc., the prostrate sick and the dying, the weakly convalescent, the few excited well ones worn out with nursing—all in danger. "Never fear; don't move. I will stop the fire," assured the priest, and while many things could have been done, and which ordinary common-sense would urge the doing of, these people, dazed and burdened by the awful epidemic, were passive in the hands of the foolish fanatic, and left undone what should have been done. So out towards the fire the priest went, with book and cross and beads, and kneeling and praying and signing the cross towards the flames did what he could according to his belief; but ruthlessly and relentlessly the fire came on, nor heeded him for one moment, and he had to flee for his life, alas, too late to



save the camp. There was weeping and wailing and rushing to and fro, and calamity and suffering and death was the sequence. We cross over the spot where these poor men and women and children were hastily laid and barely covered by the dust of Mother Earth as she received them to their long sleep.

The first night out our camp was joined by some half-breeds who were on their way to where quite a number of their people were wintering near the edge of the woods. They occupied the other side of our camp-fire, and in due time my men and self engaged in our evening worship, and so did my man Johnnie, who was a Roman Catholic. The others across the fire did not, but quietly went on with their mending and drying of moccasins. When we were through and had made up our beds these half-breeds also in turn knelt in prayer, and presently Johnnie noticed them and remarked thus: "Oh, saying your prayers now, are you? Well, we have already done that on this side of the fire; that is enough for me to-night, for if the Lord is at all like any of the lords I have travelled with, and I have travelled with a good many, the less you bother Him the better He'll like you." This was Johnnie's idea of petition and prayer, but to me it was amusing and certainly very distinct from ordinary orthodox opinion.

On Friday evening we camped at the last point of woods, and from which we had a long day's run to the Hand Hills. On the way out we saw quite a number of French half-breeds, who corroborated all the Chief Factor had heard, and also told us that now the camps were large and that starvation as well as disease was menacing them; further, that they blamed the white man for all the troubles and were talking very badly. "But," said an old French half-breed to me, "if anybody can help them out of their trouble you can, and I am glad you are going." This greatly encouraged me. Now we were at the last camp, and from here we must take wood for our noon stop, for there was a long, cold run before us. I saw that my men were somewhat dubious as to our reception at the camps; they said little, but were thinking a lot. I had purposely refrained from talking about the matter on the way, the packet having furnished plenty of material to relate and discuss. I had spent most of the last Sunday in gleaning the news of the world. The Franco-Prussian war was on, Paris was besieged, the terrible battles were being fought. I had taken notes of as much as I could of world events, knowing these would help me if I was fortunate enough to get into the Indian camps and obtain a hearing. I told my men around the camp-fire of

these stirring events, and thus we kept up our spirits and made the lonely camp as cheerful as we could.

Long before dawn we were away and running hard. When daylight came we saw that Indians were ahead of us and also travelling our way, and by and by we began to come up to the stragglers. I had some pieces of tobacco in the head of my sled, and presently when I came up to an old man picking his way with a staff in each hand, I handed him a piece of tobacco and said, "Here, grandfather, smoke this and live." The old man dropped his staves and took the roll of tobacco and smelled it, and then lifted his hands and exclaimed, "May you live long and be happy, my grandchild," and again he smelled and fondled the piece of weed. The gift had gone straight to his heart. Said he, "It is some moons since I had so much tobacco. I am glad, my grandchild; you have done me good." "Where are you going?" was my next question. "Travelling for life," replied the old man. "Where will you find it?" I again asked, and back came the answer, "Look yonder, my grandchild; do you see a blue range of hills far away?" "Yes," I answered. "There is life," said the old man. "There are my people, there are buffalo; these are life to me." "Well, keep up a good heart, my grandfather," was my parting

word as on I went. To the aged, either men or women, I gave a piece of tobacco as I passed them, and they were thankful and glad. Some had not seen a fort or a trader since last spring, others since midsummer, and this was now late in February.

On we hastened until my men and self were alone in mid-prairie and as atoms on the great spreading white winter landscape. We had neither tent nor wood with us, and as we scanned the sky we were thankful the day was clear. Clustering around the little fire of buffalo chips, drinking our cups of tea and munching our pemmican, we looked at the range of hills yet distant, and wondered what might take place with us before night came on ; but not a man said a word of fear or dread. What we felt we kept to ourselves, and again went on.

After a while we were ascending the slopes of the hills, and in good time stood on the plateau which forms the summit. Back to the north was the way we had come, an immense region stretching from below our feet to the far skyline. Anxious and nervous as I was, I could not help but look and think of the future of such a vast country. But already the smoke from the lodges hung over the southern edge of the hills, and I could hear the barking of dogs and the neighing of horses. In a little while roads from

the timbered gullies and coolies converged on the trail, and climbing on my load I shouted to my dogs and almost flew towards camp. As I drew near some women recognized me, and the cry went up, "The young preacher! The young preacher!" ("Aha-yua-me-ha-we-ye-neese," literally translated, "The young man who talks to him"—the significance being addressing the Deity). This was wafted on, and thus heralded over the brink of the hill we tobogganed right into the large camp.



## CHAPTER XI.

Interview with the head chief—Spirit of rebellion rampant—Sabbath services—A terrible storm—Big gathering of Indians—Exhorting loyalty and order—Good impression made—Distributing gifts—Return trip—Rejoicings at success of mission—Recognition of service by the Hudson's Bay Company.

ON entering the camp that night my first inquiry was for "Frightens Him's" lodge. This was pointed out to me, and in a moment I stood at the chief's door. The old man was there to meet me, and I was welcomed most heartily. "Surely the Great Spirit has sent you, John," was the manner of his greeting; "come into my lodge, behold it is yours." I pulled my dogs out of their collars, left a message for some one to pilot my men to where I was, and went in to be given the guest-seat of honor.

"Sayaketmat," I said, addressing the chief by his Cree name, "I am here on a mission. I have much to say to the camps, and I wish you would send messengers to each one, telling them that John wants to see the chiefs and head men assembled here the day after to-morrow. Here is tobacco. Word your summons as you please, but tell them that John brings greetings and

messages and help, and fain would see and speak with them two nights from now."

In a little while the runners were away, and soon fifteen large camps would know of our arrival, for I found that this was a big preconcerted rendezvous, and that within twenty miles of where I sat in Sayaketmat's lodge there were gathered several thousand Plain and Wood Crees, as well as a number of Saulteaux. The chief soon let me know that evil counsel was predominating in these camps, but said, "Who knows but that your visit at this time, coming as you have so unexpectedly, and so welcome to some of us, will turn the whole tide of feeling?" I very soon let him know what my programme was, and saw that it met with his decided approval. In came my men, and we were domiciled in the big lodge, and until midnight were stared at and interviewed by alternating crowds who came and went as space allowed, and then, tired and worn with nervous and physical strain, we slept until the camp stir awakened us on the early Sabbath morning.

The site of the camp was on an elevation several hundreds of feet above the surrounding country; at a glance one could look across an expanse of from fifty to seventy-five miles of country. A congregation of curious yet earnest listeners gathered for service in the morning.

It was a motley throng; all colors of paint, all manner of costume, all sorts of men—murderers, horse thieves, warriors, braves, chiefs and common men, polygamists and monogamists—a strange mixture, but they behaved wondrously well while I did what I could in directing their thought Godward. Twice I spoke in the big open, and held several services in lodges, and thus the day passed while all looked forward to the general gathering Monday morning. These before us were comparatively known quantities; the most of them we had met before in divers places and also in divers conditions; but to-morrow would come the strangers and wild men who, reasonably or unreasonably, hated the white man and now charged up to him all trouble and disease and hunger, made him the cause of many deaths, said he was the evil genius, and were harboring a growing spirit of revenge in their hearts. How would they receive me on the morning of the day approaching? I can assure my reader I was a bit nervous that Sunday night, but was so downright weary that I soon forgot everything in sound sleep, after leaving the whole matter in the hands of my Heavenly Father.

Monday morning came bright, cold and calm. I rose early and went out to view my surroundings. Young men were starting for the distant

caches of meat, and women striking out with dogs and horses harnessed into travois for fresh supplies of wood. Scores of women also were stretching and scraping robes and hides in the various processes of preparing and dressing these, when suddenly, like a bolt out of a clear sky, dark clouds gathered and burst, and a terrible storm was upon us. In a lifetime on the frontier, and in countless storms, I do not remember anything quite so sudden or severe as that blizzard which came to us at the Hand Hills in February of 1871. I thought of the many from the other camps who in all probability at my request were crossing the prairie stretches to come to my meeting. In common with hundreds I thought of the many who had gone forth for wood and meat and in search of horses, many of whom were women and girls, and poorly clad at that, and my heart went down in me for a time. I felt in a measure responsible for a lot of this suffering and possible death, but here was the big storm making everything hum about us and making every one work to keep lodges erect and fires going. For six hours this sudden paroxysm of Nature's forces fumed and raged and tore over our camp, and doubtless over a large area of country about us. Tens of thousands of millions of sharply frozen moisture assailed us from every point of

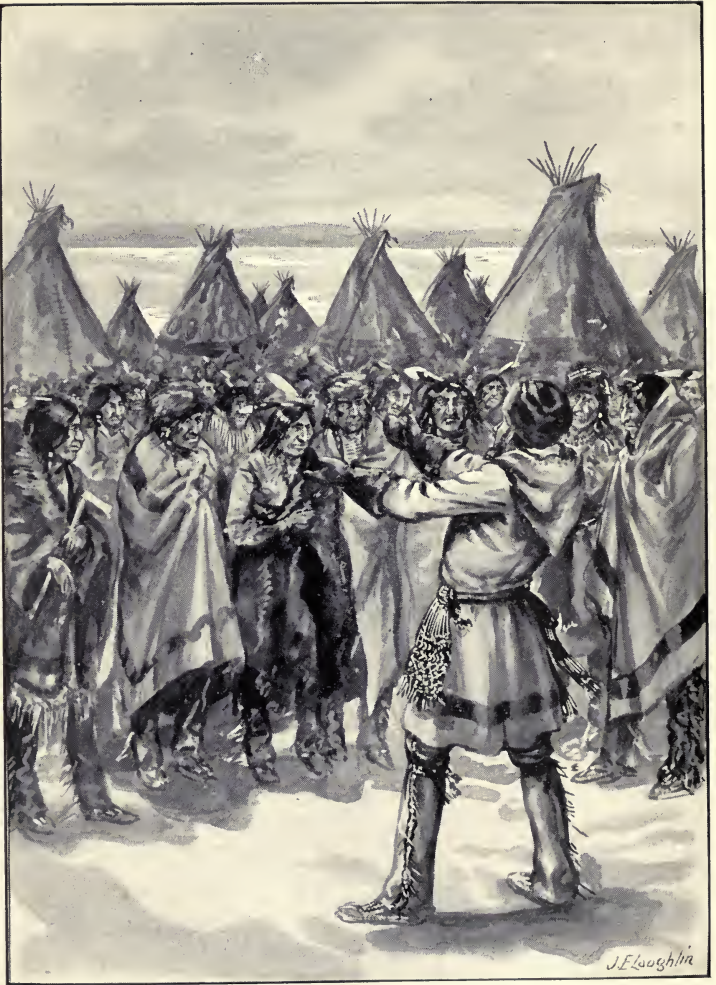
the compass. Down went the temperature, and doubtless it was this action of the Storm King that gave us, about three p.m., a clear sky and the already guaranteed promise of from forty to fifty below zero for the night quickly coming.

And now to the rescue! Out in every direction issued parents and brothers and friends to seek their loved ones. I fully expected many deaths, and if the people of this camp had not been prepared by the centuries for the rigors of a northern clime many would have perished. But these mothers and daughters and sons, the product of generations of struggling with northern winters and endless plains, did the best possible to be done under such circumstances, and either went with the storm or lay quiet under it until the worst was spent. Thus the searchers and rescuers found them, and by dark began to bring in the numb and frozen and almost perished victims.

"John, come to my mother!" "John, come to my sister!" "John, come to my son!" "Come quick, John!" came the appeal to me from all sides, and with a little cayenne pepper, the only medicine I had, I went around from camp to camp helping to rub back to life, administering a warm drink, dropping on my knees beside an unconscious patient and offering a short prayer, which was a new evangel to the hearts and ears







“The floor on which they stood was frozen prairie.” (Page 169.)

of those who listened around the lodge fires that night. All the while anxiety was heavy on me concerning the many probable victims of the storm. About midnight there were arrivals from other camps, in twos and threes and more, and I listened for the sound of mourning and wailing, and was in great suspense as to the result of my mission. It was a long, weary night which preceded the morning of Tuesday, but morning finally came, and was as if this world never knew a storm so far as sky and sun and landscape glory were concerned.

Again the crier went forth, "Come to the centre of the camp! come and listen to John!" and in a short time the large space was filling up. As I stood and looked into the many strange faces before me, I could not help wondering how these wild, sullen, disappointed and bereaved and oftentimes hungry men would receive my message. I often think of the endurance of that audience. The floor on which they stood was frozen prairie, with ice and snow for paint and varnish. The temperature was down, I do not know where, for there was no thermometer within two hundred miles of us. My breath became ice and hung as such upon moustache and beard. I spoke for a full hour or more. I brought them the greetings of the northern settlements; told them that both white

and red men were interested in them and sorrowed with them, and that my mission was to tell them that we, like them, had suffered; that the anxiety about them had resulted in my being sent by the Church and the great Company which had dwelt amongst and traded with their people for many generations; that I did not come empty-handed, or with lip sympathy merely, but I had with me something for them to smoke, and also ammunition and flints and gun-worms for their hunting and for protection from their enemies; that it was the wish of all to help them. Great had been our mutual sorrow; doubtless we all had sinned, and our Great Father had permitted this disease to come, and we in common with many others were punished. As brave men it became us to resignedly accept our punishment, and to repent of our past wrong-doing and turn unto the great and good Spirit and live. I told them that we had not been alone: that across the great waters a most fearful war had been going on; that while we had lost hundreds by disease, over there tens of thousands had been slaughtered. I gave them a picture of the siege of Paris, the starvation and death and disease that accompanied it, and the terrible slaughter of the Franco-Prussian battles, fresh on my brain from the papers of the last packet. I wound up by

saying, "I will gladly carry your messages to those forts and settlements on the Saskatchewan, and when we are through my men will distribute the gifts we have brought as the evidence of the good-will and wishes of your old friends, the Hudson's Bay Company."

When I ceased speaking the head chief present, Sweet Grass, rose, and addressing the assembly asked, "Will I voice this multitude?" and there came back a thundering answer, "Yes!" Then turning to me he said: "We are thankful that our friends in the north have not forgotten us. In sorrow and in hunger and with many hardships we have gathered here, where we have grass and timber, and, since we came, buffalo in the distance, few, though still sufficient to keep us alive. We have grumbled at hunger and disease and long travel through many storms and cold; our hearts have been hard, and we have had bitter thoughts and doubtless said many foolish and bad words, but it is true, as you say, John, we have sinned, and we must bear our punishment. My people are thankful for your coming to us; we are thankful that your father sent you, that the Company chief asked you to come. We believe you, John; you belong to us, therefore you were not afraid to come the long distance and enter as a friend into our camp and lodges. Some of us



have met you before; we have listened to you because of what you said, but more because of the way you have spoken even in our own language and as one of ourselves. Yes, John, all these men and women and children from to-day are your friends, and as you leave us we will think of you and wish you prosperity and blessing. Your coming has done us good; it has stayed evil and turned our thoughts to better things. We feel to-day we are not alone; man is numerous and God is great. We are thankful for the gifts you have brought with you. We will smoke and forget, and if there has been wrong will forgive. These women will drink the tea, and bless the 'trading chief,' and bless John. Tell the 'trading chief' we thank him, and as in the past will again frequent his forts and posts. Tell your father we thank him for his son and all his good wishes for us and our people." Then, turning around in appeal to the crowd, he asked, "Have I spoken your minds?" and again a great "Yes" came with loud assent.

And now we placed the people in lines and circles, and my men and a few Indians I had selected went at the work of distribution. Powder and balls and tobacco and tea and sugar and gun-flints and gun-worms were given out, and never in my life did I witness a more thankful and delighted crowd. Many a warm

grip of the hand came to me from men whom I had never previously seen. Little Pine, who had been quoted as saying that he would kill my father the first chance he had, came to me and said, "You have changed my heart, John; henceforth I will think good of you and all your people." Ere long the last load of powder was given and the last pipeful of tobacco carefully wrapped up or put away in the pouch of some brave, and our present mission was done in this camp. I shouted to the crowd: "We were five nights coming to see you, and, as you well know, we travelled hard; but we know that your friends in the north are so anxious to hear of you and to learn of your condition that my men and self will take but three nights to reach Edmonton, when we will tell them of how we found you, and will carry your kindly greetings to the 'trading chief' and in turn to all the people of the north."

This was received with great approval and shouts of "You can do it, John, if any one can."

It was late in the afternoon when we left the rows and circles of lodges and took the trail leading over the summit of the hills. We carried wood on our sleds and camped for a few hours as night came on at the foot of the high range, and long before daylight struck for the "north country." I remember well how my

men handled axes the next night. "Now we will have a fire," was the frequent exclamation from their lips.

Early Saturday afternoon we were on the brink of the high bank of the noble Saskatchewan. It would seem that some of the men were watching for and at once recognized us, for up went the old flag and down the long hill we tobogganed after our eager dogs, and across the ice and up the bank, to be met at the fort's gates by all the inhabitants, at the head of them the Chief Factor and my father and brother-in-law, Hardisty. The two latter had come up all the way from Victoria to watch for our coming, so anxious were they, as indeed were all the settlements along the river. We were many times welcome, and when I had opportunity to report there was much rejoicing. The dark spell was broken, and we now looked into the future with hope for brighter days.

The grateful Chief Factor took me into his office and told me that while he remained in charge of the Saskatchewan district I should rank as an officer of the Company—that is, I should have the entry of their forts and posts, be furnished with provisions and even transports if I should need them, also be given a liberal discount on any purchase I might make for family or self from any of their stores; all

of which was helpful to my work and gave me as a missionary and man in the country a standing of respect and influence. Father was delighted with the success of my mission, and Hardisty warmed to me more than ever.

Monday we started east and reached Victoria Tuesday evening, and again resumed the routine duties of our life. A trip to White Fish Lake was undertaken, followed by several trips to Indian camps, where from lodge to lodge we preached and lectured, sowing the seeds of faith in God and man and country. Many an hour around the camp-fire the eye glistened and the ear was tense, and the hearts of strong men were moved, as in answer to some pertinent question we talked of law and government and civilization and Christianity. No idle time was ours; father was incessant, and if we had wished to loiter he would have none of it.

## CHAPTER XII.

A peace mission to Rocky Mountain House—A Dutchman for travelling companion—Call at Pigeon Lake Mission—Difficult travel—An obstinate pack-train boss—A Blackfoot scalawag—At the Mountain Fort—Interview with Indian chiefs—Homeward bound—A runaway couple—Receive word of my wife's death—Hastening homeward—A new breech-loader—A mission established at Edmonton—Father's narrow escape from drowning—We lose our buckboard—Floating down the Saskatchewan.

TOWARDS the end of March a courier came from Edmonton to father, and after he and Hardisty had been closeted together for some time, father came over to me and asked me to undertake another mission in the interests of peace. Certain events had transpired at the Rocky Mountain House, and the Chief Factor feared that another rebellion was brewing, for, as he reasoned, the same influences had been at work up there as were moving in the Red River Settlement. Would I go and size up the situation, and forestall any mischief that might threaten? The Hudson's Bay Company would bear all the expense, and my mission must be kept religiously secret. The Chief Factor was exceedingly anxious I should undertake this



work, and now with Hardisty and father urging I could not but give my consent. That same night I started for Edmonton, and being delayed by thaw, did not reach there until the second morning at daybreak; but the watchful Factor was up to meet me. Most of the day we were together in his private office, and as night came on I left the fort with an order in my pocket, authorizing me to take and use for my purpose any men, horses, dogs or material of the Hudson's Bay Company's I might come across or need to further my object.

Leaving Edmonton I had incidentally as my companion a Dutchman who was going as far as Pigeon Lake. His name was Myers, but "Dutchman" was all he got anywhere in the North-West, just as I, with all my titles and degrees, got nothing but "John." Soon after we started, and early in the night, it began to rain, which stopped our dog travel for some hours. We camped on Rabbit Knoll, slept for a while, and then about two a.m. assayed another start. Progress was slow, but we kept on until sunrise, and now the thaw was general, and we perforce made camp and slept. All day the thaw went on, and I saw that if there came no change my dog travel for the season was near at an end. Fortunately, however, it grew colder toward evening, and by nine o'clock we

were able to resume our journey. On we went at a splendid step as the night grew colder, and by the break of day were at the humble mission home of Pigeon Lake. The Rev. Peter Campbell was away on a trip, but Mrs. Campbell and her brother Matthew (Kinwoskwanase, or "The Tall Man," as the Indians called him) I found at home, and they welcomed me gladly, and with these and a few Indians and half-breeds about the place I spent the Sabbath. Short services and rest as much as possible were the order of the day. Here I found two Indian boys who wanted to go west to the Mountain Fort and who asked if they might accompany me. They were about fifteen and sixteen years of age, and as I had plenty of provisions and wanted company, I said, "Why, yes, come along; but you know you must travel if you go with me." At this they laughed and promised to keep up. Our course was the full length of Pigeon Lake, and as I knew that with good ice no men could keep up with my dogs for that distance, I sent the boys on early in the evening, and as I had been the bearer of some mail matter to this isolated point I said to Matthew, "You can sit up and read while I sleep, and at midnight to the minute" (we had no alarm clocks) "you will wake me and I will start." All of which was done, and by one a.m. I was

gliding across the smooth ice of this beautiful lake at a high rate of speed. Reaching the other shore I found that the snow was gone, and I had to pick up my sleigh and load and carry them across many ponds of water, wading in these up to the knees and deeper at times.

Long before daylight I came upon my boys fast asleep, and remembering that these lads had not eaten anything but poor fish for some weeks, and had come a good run, I said, "We will boil the kettle and have our first breakfast," and soon the fire glowed against the surrounding darkness, and we were munching rich back fat and good dried meat. To the boys this was as a foretaste of heaven, and I was pleased to observe their appetites, which evidently betokened vigorous health. Then away on the run we went, the boys now helping me in turn across the water-stretches, and I wondering how long at this rate, with rivers bursting and waters flowing, we would be in reaching the Mountain Fort, my first objective point. By sunrise we were on the bank of the Battle River, and to my great satisfaction I saw some men and horses moving there. Good-bye to dog travel for this spring, thought I, and on down across the valley we ran to the river, on the ice of which the spring overflow was rushing rapidly, but as we were already well soaked

and did not mind further wetting, it was the work of a minute to unharness dogs and carry sled and harness and load across.

Asking for the man in charge of this pack-train, for such this little gathering of men and horses proved to be, a young French half-breed was pointed out to me. Accosting him I said, "I want you to let me have two good horses and one pack-saddle and one riding-saddle." "I won't do it," was the prompt answer I got to my humble request. However, I soon impressed on this master of the pack-train that if I needed I would take him and his whole train, and leave all his packs piled up on the banks of the river for the time being, and he then quite willingly gave me the two horses and saddles, and in an incredibly short time my willing boys (for I saw they were immensely tickled at my handling of this pack-train boss) had the horses saddled and one packed, and I had hung my little oaken sled on the limb of a spruce and put my dog harness in the pack; and now with delighted dogs bounding around me as I rode, and the two boys running behind the pack-horse, we pursued our journey. We crossed the Blind Man, passed the Three Butes, crossed the Medicine Lodge, and when we camped that night I complimented my boys on their run. I verily believe I was the most tired of the three, for this was my first ride of any length in some months.



We were up and away early next morning, and all day pushing westward, climbing the continent, part of the time in full view of the glorious mountains, the views of which from the summits of some big ranges of hills we crossed were tremendously grand and inspiring. Evening approaching, we turned aside into hiding and camped, for we were now in the way of the southern tribes. Unless some one stumbled upon us here or had closely followed our trail, we would not be discovered. Next morning bright and early we were off again, and as we came out into the converging of trails from the south, presently from what seemed nowhere there came a loud "Ha-he-ya," etc., with all the notes of the gamut. Then came in view a Blackfoot and one I had seen before. His name was Mokoyoomuhkan, or "The Running Wolf," and a noted rascal he was. So far as we could see he was alone and on foot. The horse we were packing had, I suppose, been hammered on the head at some time, for if you approached him from any side he would turn quickly and attempt to kick; and when presently the Blackfoot said to me, "I am tired; let me ride on your pack," I readily acquiesced, never expecting the horse would let him on. But in a flash he had the horse by the head, and speaking some strange words flung himself on to the pack, and on we



went with our new companion singing a war-song in a strong contralto. Many a horse had this same fellow stolen, and many a life had he taken, but we were now near the Mountain Fort and had no fear on his account.

Reaching the fort I found that the Mountain Stoneys had but recently gone south along the mountains. Making some inquiries I made up my mind to follow these Stoneys, as amongst them I knew I would find some sharp fellow who would doubtless know all I was seeking to know, and either corroborate or dissipate the Chief Factor's fears or suspicions. The gentleman in charge of the post furnished me with several horses and an old Stoney as guide, and leaving my boy companions, we recrossed the Saskatchewan and made for the trail of these mountain people, and keeping at it camped a long way on the trail that night. Of course, I was quietly sounding everybody I met, and gleaning from these all that I could which concerned my special business.

The next morning we crossed the Red Deer and came up to our friends, who were on the move, and thence went on with them, as also we did the next day, and spent the rest of the week and the Sabbath in their camp. During my sojourn with these hardy aborigines I had services morning and evening and practically all

day Sunday. I interviewed most of the old men and chiefs, and with a farewell service on the Monday morning left their camp to return to the Mountain Fort. In the interval the thaw had gone on, and now the Red Deer was a wild stream; but my old and true friend Mark had volunteered to come that far with us, and he did the exploring and took the risk, and in good time we were across; then with another warm handshake with faithful Mark we started north, on the way meeting a runaway couple, the maiden turning out to be the step-daughter of my guide. The old man, however, merely gave them his blessing, and I added to this, "Be true to one another, and when some missionary comes along, be married by him." I am glad to say these young people took my advice, and were married in good time and have lived exemplary Christian lives. The youth was the son of Bear's Paw, a Stoney chief.

Reaching the Mountain Fort, I found one of my boys still there and quite willing to accompany me back; and being furnished with fresh horses and plenty of provisions by the gentleman in charge, Capt. Hacklin, my boy and self recrossed the big river, now open and fordable, and started on our return journey towards Edmonton. The lowland streams were full, and we were often wet, and as our horses were thin

we of necessity had to travel slowly; but we reached the south side of the Saskatchewan at Edmonton on the morning of the fourth day. Here we found the ice still intact but shaky. Here also we met some of the head men and chiefs from the Hand Hills, who had come into Edmonton and were now returning. They were delighted to renew our acquaintance, and old Sweet Grass was profuse in his compliments on my work of going up and down amongst the people. "You have done us great good, my grandchild; you will have the smile of the Good Spirit; you have the blessing of this old man at any rate." I told them of buffalo travelling eastward towards their camps, which was indeed good news to them. Crossing on the ice as by the skin of our teeth, and by good fortune having only one horse break through, but in such a manner that he was got out all right, we again entered the fort.

The Chief Factor welcomed me back, provided me with hot and cold water, towels and a comfortable room, and said, "When you are ready, John, come up to my office." In a little while I went up to the office, but as I was going through the fort yard I saw two young fellows ride in from Victoria. I merely nodded to them and went on up to the Factor's private office, and we had but sat down to talk when a clerk

knocked at the door and handed in a packet. "Excuse me, John," said the Factor, and he opened the packet, and taking out some letters read one. Noting his face change color, I wondered at what was disturbing him. Opening another he read that, and then turning to me said, "John, I know you are a Christian man. You want all the help you can have now, for I must tell you that your wife is dead, and was buried at Victoria the day before yesterday." I had left her in the bloom of health when starting on this trip, and now she was dead and buried! To me now on my way home, exultant with the successful accomplishment of my mission, and looking forward to resuming my journey in the morning, the shock was almost overwhelming. The good old Factor kindly left me to myself, and I returned to my room and fought it out with my own sorrow. Then a profound longing came over me to reach home as soon as I possibly could. The Factor expected this, and coming to my room he said, "Those other matters can stand just now, John, and I will arrange for your journey at once." We took two horses out of the mill service, for at that time Edmonton had a horse-power mill, and in a little while my boy and self were on our way east.

A spring storm had come, and a foot or more

of snow was on the ground. Though our horses were big and strong, the deep snow with the partially thawed-out ground beneath made progress slow and heavy; but all this was as nothing to my sore heart and the heavy burden laid on my life's experience. We camped between the Sturgeon and Deep Creek, we crossed the Sturgeon, which was much swollen, by zig-zagging on the ice, and during the night our horses, which we had hobbled, having disappeared, my boy John ran back to the river and came to me, with eyes fairly starting from his head, to say that the horses had been drowned. I ran with him to the crossing, and very soon ascertained that our horses had not come this way; we found them on our way back to camp. It was clearly an hallucination that possessed this bright, honest boy when he thought he saw those horses drowned in the river.

The next day, when east of Sucker Creek, we camped to the right of a camp of travellers going our way. After passing them a mile or so I heard a rush behind me, and up galloped a big French half-breed, Abram Salway, with a fresh horse, and literally pulling me from the big clumsy, jaded animal I was riding, and putting my saddle on his splendid, easy-going saddle-beast, he renewed my life and made me



almost forget my sorrow by the spontaneous kindness and cheer of his act. On now at trot and canter for the balance of the journey to Victoria, where mother and sisters and my own little girls welcomed me and did all they could to comfort and console. Six years of companionship and mutual experiences in life had been ours; many hardships had we shared, many pleasures as well, and now the faithful wife and mother had gone on. The Indians at White Fish and at Victoria and Pigeon Lake mourned her loss, for to them she had ever been kind and sympathizing, and many of the women loved her. This was now the third time that I had gone away bidding my loved ones, sisters and wife farewell for a time. In each case they were then, to human eyes, strong and well, and yet in each case I had come home to stand by their newly-rounded graves. Without question this was hard to bear, and yet we did not mourn as those who have no hope.

When I reached home I found father and Mr. Hardisty away at White Fish Lake attending a quarterly meeting. In a few days they returned, and as spring was now upon us and the fowl were in from the south, they planned a couple of days' shooting at Egg Lake. Seldom in my life had I gone out for the specific purpose of sport; the most of my hunting was done

in actual work and incidental with such. I alone was the possessor of a breech-loading shotgun, the first of the kind to come into the country. It was a revelation to every one of us. Hitherto the flint and percussion locks were the best weapons we owned, but here was something wonderful, and while I was ordinarily a fairly good shot, now I gathered in the birds rapidly and got no credit for it—it was the gun. We made stands from which to watch the flight of the birds. Hardisty and old Samuel Whitford, who was an expert at calling geese and waveys, were out at the point, while I was stationed farther in. Soon along came a fine flock of waveys, and while my friends were much nearer to the birds, I shot right over their heads and dropped a couple almost into their stand; then, reloading while old Samuel called the birds around, again I met the flock before my friends thought of shooting, and dropped a brace. At this old Samuel dropped his gun in amazement and exclaimed, "Wah-woh," with strong significance. He could not realize how any one could reload in so short a time, and suggested that we move farther apart. I cheerfully told him the whole world was before him. We had with us several of the natives as well as Messrs. Hardisty and Tait and father, all genial souls, and the whole trip was cheery and help-

ful. Our bag was a large one, and I was ahead—but it was the gun!

During the spring of 1871 it was determined to establish a mission at Edmonton. For years this post had been on the Minutes of Conference, but up to this time there had been no manifestation of a church in that vicinity. Father went to begin the work, and I was left in charge at Victoria. He had again to start from the bottom, but the Hudson's Bay Company's employees and the few English-speaking half-breeds in the vicinity, with quite a number to come and settle beside the Mission, took hold, and the new cause was started. At Victoria we had good congregations, with country work up and down the settlement and out north some ten miles, as also visiting wandering Indian camps within reasonable distance. At this time it was very fortunate that the buffalo were quite numerous on the big plains. The Indians were contented and were also kept busy by their presence, which went far to make them forget the trouble and discontent of the past year. Thousands of bags of pemmican and bales of dried meat were made, and the material for new lodges and clothing and moccasins and robes secured, all of which was helpful to both missionaries and people.

About midsummer father came down to take mother up to Edmonton, and in company with

House and Whitford he and mother started up the north side with some carts and a buck-board well loaded, for they were now moving to their home. My little brother George and myself left some three days later, and soon saw by the condition of the roads and creeks that we would overhaul our parents long before they reached Edmonton. Creeks ordinarily small were now swollen rivers, and my young brother was frightened more than once as we forded them. Approaching Sucker Creek as evening came on, we saw that our people had recently left there, and we also saw that the stream was very dangerous. Its fall is at all times rapid, and now the volume of water coming down was fearful to look upon; and I, having neither axe nor canvas nor hides, and fearful for my companion's sake, had about made up my mind to camp and wait until the waters had subsided, when I heard a shout. Answering this I found it was father's party, which had barely succeeded in reaching the summit of the opposite bank and were encamped there. "Hold on! we have made a canoe, and will bring it down!" was shouted to us, and in a little while father and his men were on the other bank in a skin canoe which they had made of two buffalo hides. As the stream was narrow, the method employed was to tie a stone to a small light line and fling it

across, and with this draw over a stronger line, which in turn pulled the canoe, another line being fastened to the other end of the canoe. Paddles in such a current and with such a craft would be of little use. But this time there were two lines, and with one of these one of our horses was pulled or helped through the current of this most turbulent stream. Even with the aid of this line the horse went down as if he had been flung from a height. Then my brother and the saddles went over, and I pulled the canoe back with the two lines attached to it. Our second horse was helped across, and then I was pulled over, and we were all on the same side. I congratulated father on making thirty miles in three days, and he said I could not do any better myself, "for," said he, "no man living has worked harder than Harry and Philip and myself since we left Victoria; and more than this, we have run some risks." And when we were up the hill and around the camp-fire I found that they had run some risks and that father had well-nigh lost his life. For eleven years he had been fording this creek, but when he and his party came to its brink this time they found it was under the influence of a cloud-burst or some abnormal storm, for it was wild and dangerous-looking. The depth did not appear very great, and father, unloading



the buckboard, attempted to drive across. He had Little Bob No. 1 in the shafts, but no sooner had horse and rig struck the current than it hurled them down and rolled them over and over—horse, buckboard and driver. Mother and the two men beheld a strange and to them awful sight; father was somehow so mixed up in the scrape as not to be able to swim away from horse or rig. Under projecting trees, in amongst floating debris, at times disappearing altogether, he was swept down the raging torrent, and, beholding the turmoil of trees and logs and the mixing up of horse and rig, the anxious and terrified spectators felt it would be almost too much to expect father to come out alive. However, he did succeed finally in biting himself loose from the reins, which somehow had become twisted around his arm, and being a powerful swimmer he struck for the shore, and after much struggling succeeded in reaching the same bank he had started from. Far down the stream, and scarcely stopping to take breath, he joined the others in running after the horse and rig in the hope that the current might bring these in near enough to save either horse or buckboard. But now the bed of the river was widening and eddies were forming, and presently, to their joy and astonishment, they saw Bob in one of the eddies on the far side of the

river, swimming into the shore, where he found bottom at the foot of a precipice. He seemed spent, but looking around and seeing father he gave a neigh which seemed to say, "Here I am, what is left of me," and father shouted across the noisy current, "Stand still, Bob; rest easy, old fellow, and we will save you yet," and Bob answered, "I'll do what I can." Noble fellow, in many a hard place he had already proved true, and again he was to do so. Father ran back up the stream, and jumping on the back of a fine large horse called Jack, plunged in turn into the river, and though the current at once took the big strong brute off his legs, yet, being free from the impedimenta of rig and harness, he soon made the other side, and galloping down to the place where Bob was barely holding his own, and seeming to fully realize that if he moved the current would again have him and the rig at its mercy, father soon had him by the head and pulled him in, and, making fast the rig to a bush with one of the reins, unfastened Bob and landed him at last. Then there was joy on both banks of this lusty stream. After this our friends played no more with this current, but went to work to make a canoe and manufacture lines out of raw hide which they had with them as cart covers. They had but barely finished crossing when they per-

ceived our approach and came to our help, and right glad were they to have our assistance for the rest of the trip to Edmonton.

On the morrow we floundered through and across many little streams and sloughs, and at the Vermilion, because of the snapping of the lines, had the misfortune to lose our buckboard. I ran down across points through dense forest, but was unable to stop its course as it was swept out into the big river. This was a serious loss, and a great present discomfort to mother, who now had to mount a saddle for the rest of the way. We bridged Deep Creek, crossed over the Sturgeon, and then, being only twenty-three miles from Edmonton, I took Little Bob and galloped him in, and borrowing a harness and rig drove back fast to meet mother, and thus gave her the last ten miles in comparative comfort, for by this time she was very weary of the saddle.

I found at Edmonton a grist belonging to our school-teacher at Victoria, Mr. McKenzie, and as there was no let-up to the rain and floods, I concluded to leave our horses and buy a skiff, load McKenzie's grist into it, and float down stream, all of which was easily done. An ox and cart from mill to boat, and the strong current of the Saskatchewan did the rest. Leaving Edmonton at four p.m. we (for my little

brother accompanied me) made home at Victoria at nine a.m. next day. All night while we slept the skiff went whirling on and around and down this mighty river, traversing a country, now wilderness, but evidently destined some day to swarm with humanity—at any rate, this I thought that day as I lay back with my book on sacks of bran and barley flour.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Down the Saskatchewan to Fort Carlton by skiff—Fort Pitt—Noted Indian chiefs—A lonely camp and a solitary wolf—A celestial battle—David brings his bride to Victoria—News from the outside world—To Edmonton in a spring-waggon—My wonderful crop of potatoes—A severe attack of the mumps—A visit from father—Two typical westerners—The White Mud Settlement.

I HAD at this time summering with me my sister, Mrs. Hardisty, and her children. One day a courier came in from Fort Carlton instructing me to send Mrs. Hardisty and family down to that point, and as all the Hudson's Bay Company's posts and forts were parts of our missions and circuits, and as this gave me the opportunity of visiting Fort Pitt and possibly Fort Carlton, and also of meeting any Indians who might be *en route* to or fro, I concluded to take her and children down the river in the skiff. Arranging to have her horses and two of mine driven across country in the first place to Fort Pitt, we embarked and began our journey down stream. In less than two days we had made Fort Pitt, which I judge is from one hundred and eighty to two hundred miles by the



winding of the river ; but such was the current, and so continuous was our movement day and night, without loss of time, that we did better than a hundred miles in a day. Here we heard that Mr. Hardisty had passed west, hoping to meet his wife and children, of course never thinking of their coming by river. Knowing that he would return to this point when he met our men and horses, we waited and I had full opportunity to do some mission work. Here traded the Plain and Wood Crees, the Chipewyans of the Beaver River and north country, the Saulteaux and the Cree, and sometimes even Blackfeet came to this post. In my time noted Indians, such as Sweet Grass, Big Bear and Little Pine, made this their headquarters. A big trade in provisions was generally done here, and both wood and plain furs were taken in large quantities ; many a boat-load of furs and pemmican went down the Saskatchewan annually from Fort Pitt. Several times in my journeyings I had been privileged to preach the Gospel in the mother-tongue to people who up to these times had never heard it. Nomads, wanderers out of the ages, a strange, mysterious people they were, and how solemnly and earnestly they would look into my eyes as I came to them in their own language with this new and wonderful evangel. This present occasion

was no exception, and I held services with a mixed crowd of tribes and peoples. God only knows if any permanent good was done as to Christianity, but in the meantime, at any rate, they were made to understand something about law and civilization, and, I do hope, of Christ and heaven.

Hardisty came in Sunday afternoon and thus relieved me of going any farther. We visited a good part of Monday and then parted, my friends going east and I west. It was a lovely evening, and alone with my two horses, Bob No. 1 and Archie, either following the other and not needing to be led, my equipment a leather shirt, trousers and blanket, and my gun and ammunition and some dried meat as provision all on my saddle, so that my free horse was indeed free, on we went and near dark crossed Frog Creek and camped. I have already told my readers I never was made to be alone; I have always found myself in such condition under protest. I remember I was unusually lonely that night. I hobbled my horses, and as they moved off to better grass I made a fire and roasted some dried meat, and nibbling at it thought one man thirty-five miles from the nearest of his kind, so far as he knows, is entirely too far away, and I wondered how some are so constituted as almost to enjoy soli-

tude. Then I became aware that a pair of eyes were fastened on me. A casual glance over my shoulder caught a movement, and gripping my gun I awaited developments. Presently I saw that the object looking down from the brink of the hill was a big timber wolf. This was a relief, for if he was alone I did not fear him; so I threw more wood on the fire, renewed my attention to the dried meat, and by and by moved away and spread my saddle-blanket, then wrapping myself in my own blanket I lay down with gun at hand and fell asleep to waken as the day sky came with all nature around me and myself as well covered with heavy dew. Breaking another bit of meat, I ate as I went for my horses, which had ascended the hill and hobbled some distance. Soon I was back again, and saddling up was off on the lope in the fresh of the morning, while all the earth and its luxuriant vegetation was glistening with moisture, which, as the sun appeared, flashed and brightened the whole scene. I said to myself, "I will do well if I reach Saddle Lake to-day." A vigorous trot, a few miles of canter alternating, and in three hours changing horses, on I went across valleys and over plains, in and out and through and between islands of timber, all the while keeping a sharp lookout on the distant horizon, and as much as possible on everything within

this, myself always its centre. Thus across Moose Creek and the Dog Rump and the immense stretches of country this side and between and beyond them, on and on past Egg Lake No. 2, and by the early evening I had made Saddle Lake, with self and horses still fresh.

Near sundown, while going over a high range of hills, I witnessed a grand celestial battle. Two heavy thunder-clouds were coming rapidly together, the meeting promising to take place right over my course. I alighted and belted my blanket about me, leaving the upper part to pull over my head; then, resuming my ride, saw the wonderful fight in the heavens above. Lightning flashed and artillery roared, and down came a torrent of rain, until the jump of my horse was one continuous splash. And now the scene was sublimely grand: flash and crash and roar and rumble, and then another louder and angrier discharge, and thus these atmospheric legions approached each other, each jagged cloud seeming to reach out to the skirmishing lines of the other. Suddenly they gripped, and the heavens opened their floods, and splash, splash went my horse's feet until we were on the bridge of the White Mud and only nine miles from home. Then I jumped down, and unsaddling my horse I caught the other, and bestriding him was away through the jack-pines,

a narrow strip of sandy land, and across the Smoky Creek and through the valley and over the hill, and down into Victoria and home. The bracing effect of that northern air may be imagined when I remark that neither myself nor horses were tired, and yet since morning we had come one hundred and three miles—not guess-work but actual measurement. Not sleeping much the night before, and being drenched through to the skin for some hours in the evening, I was in prime condition for sleep; indeed I awoke only when our people were preparing the table for dinner. Dressing I went out to look at my horses, who met me with a whinny and a look that said, "Well, we are ready to go on," and I rubbed their noses and slapped their backs and went into dinner.

At this time my sister Libbie, afterwards Mrs. Young, and my two eldest daughters, Flora and Ruth, were with me. But one day who should turn up out at the hay-field where I was working but my brother David, who blushed as he told me that he had not come alone, having brought with him a wife. Of course I was glad, for his sake as also for my own, as they would for this year, I hoped, make their home with me in the Mission house. I put away my scythe for the rest of the afternoon, and went in with David to be introduced to my new sister, whom



I found to be a bright, fresh, healthy young Scotch-Canadian woman, daughter of a sturdy pioneer of the second degree—first in Ontario and now in Manitoba. I found the two women already well acquainted, and no wonder, for they were but two of the same kind in an immense stretch of country. David and his bride had driven nine hundred miles on their honeymoon trip, and coming on fast had left their cart and outfit far in the rear. David had the latest news from the outside world: Winnipeg was starting, settlers were coming in, the change had begun. He had brought with him some new arms which were significant of a change.

The next morning we took my two horses and David's light rig, and he and I started on a flying trip to Edmonton. We have the news of the world, and only some weeks old; we are not selfish, we must share it with father and mother and friends at Edmonton; at any rate we will be back for Sunday. "Good-bye, girls," and we are away in a whirl of dust. This is my first ride in a three-spring waggon for many years; it quite intoxicates me, and Bob and Archie are wondering what kind of vehicle they are pulling behind them. The waters have subsided, and we fairly bowl along, and early next day are telling the news of Winnipeg and Toronto and London, yea, the world, to a listen-

ing company at Edmonton. Turning back the next morning, we are at Victoria the following day and at work again.

This had been a season of almost absolute rest from tribal war in this north land. The buffalo had kept out on the plains and had been quite numerous; this wild people, too, had seen so much of death in the last year that they were weary of trouble and longed to have rest for a season. However, as autumn advanced the buffalo came north, and with them the camps, and hovering near and on the trails of these the war-parties. We were every little while hearing of fresh skirmishes, and were glad enough when our settlement began to fill up for the winter.

This was the autumn of my wonderful crop of potatoes and barley. In the spring I said to myself, "I don't know much about farming, but I believe in this country I can make no mistake about potatoes and barley;" so I went to work and hauled out all the manure about the place, and then ploughed deep, for I had a good team of work horses that had been trained on a farm. Then I sowed my potatoes and handled them in my own way, in the summer weeded and tilled them, and in autumn the promise was rich. But a large camp of Plain Crees came in and settled for a couple of weeks just outside and above the

mission field, and presently it was told me, "John, they're stealing your potatoes," and I said, "Ke-yam" ("Never mind,") and my very indifference stopped the stealing in a large measure. Presently I thought I would ask this whole camp to help me dig up my crop. Accordingly I said to the chief, Big Bear, and some of his head men, "To-morrow I want to take up my potatoes; will you tell the people to help me?" and they promised to do so. I made my arrangements, team, waggon, bags, etc., and the next day we went at it, men, women and children. Soon the potatoes, in piles, and heaps, and bags, were all over the ground. I selected some young men to load and unload, and did no more myself than drive about superintending the work. The way those potatoes were dug and picked and cleaned and dusted and bagged was a caution, also the way my loading crew worked was splendid. The whole thing was new to these buffalo-eaters; the wonderful crop, this strange four-wheeled iron-bound cart, this most obedient team of horses. Some of them had never taken part in such sport in all their history, and all day I took the fertility of the soil, and the response to agriculture, industry, and the beneficence of the Creator as my texts, and from the vantage ground of the waggon, with reins in hand and rushing things, I lec-

tured and preached every little while to listening crowds. This was a first-class object lesson; every little while some one would say, "John, look!" and there going for camp would be a woman or girl bending under the weight of potatoes inside her blanket, and I merely said, carelessly, "Ke-yam, ke-yam." Indeed there was no need to worry over a few potatoes—the ground was full of them.

All day we hauled in that short distance. The Mission was in possession of a huge cellar which some miners had made as an expression of gratitude to father, and into this we sent the potatoes like a deluge. All day the sneaking of back-loads off to camp went on, and in the evening there still remained fully one-fourth of the field undug. Then I sent for the chief and told him I was grateful for the help his people had given me, and that I was satisfied that he might now dismiss them home to camp and tell them that I would give his camp the balance of the field to dig for themselves. There were loud acclaims at this announcement, and the chief sent the people home on the jump, promising a fair start for all in the morning. And I can assure my reader that in the morning that field was a sight, and further, I will venture to say that no spot in the British realm had any better pulverizing and cultivating than that one during

that season. I once and for all time demonstrated that potatoes could be grown on the Saskatchewan.

Following on the heels of the smallpox of last season, the mumps were the fashionable disease of this year; several had died of them, and the type was a severe one. Some time in October an old Indian brought me word of buffalo near at hand, and as I had two Indian boys with me we hunted up our horses, and crossing a waggon and two carts, took with us a couple of running horses and started out after meat. Already I had premonitions of mumps and felt very miserable; nevertheless I went on, and meeting with much success in my hunt, was soon loaded up with fine meat. But oh, how I suffered! Presently I was unable to sit on my horse. This would have been a glorious trip, both for the supplying of our need for fresh meat and for the sport connected therewith, had it not been for those abominable mumps and my sublime inexperience concerning them. As it was I did the very worst I could have done, and intensified the disease, as doubtless did numbers of others, some of whom died in consequence.

For the home journey I had to lie stretched out on top of the waggon, and in the two days we occupied in travelling it seemed to me I died many times; every rut and knoll was torture



to me, and when I reached Victoria my brother David was so shocked with my appearance that he at once despatched a courier to Edmonton for father. Then an old half-breed, Peter Whitford, came to see me and took me in hand and helped me, and when father arrived I was able to meet him up the road, and he smiled as we shook hands and said that he almost expected as much, but was so startled by David's despatch that he hurried down. We were glad to see him. This was his first introduction to his new daughter, Annie. He had ridden in a hurry ninety miles over a rough country, and would now return and make no fuss about it, nor lose much time in this journey of one hundred and eighty miles. Verily this big country gave men to take on big ideas of life and work. This last summer had been to father a busy one, but now the humble mission-house at Edmonton was ready for occupancy, some out-buildings erected, and the start on the church made. Much mental worry, much hard physical labor, everything done by hand—chopping, sawing, planing without any machinery—to build a house at this time and have it finished half-way decent entailed labor and patience in the extreme, and with all this came the week-night meetings and all the Sunday work. Other men rested, but the missionary never; he was doctor, surgeon, dentist, nurse,

lawyer, magistrate, judge; he was diplomat and ambassador, and all the time the representative of civilization and government and church and Christianity; no wonder the lines multiplied on his face and his hair became gray. And thus the winter of 1871 and 1872 came to the missions of the Saskatchewan.

Our life at Victoria was a full one. Never in the history of this place had we so many people about us as at this time; church services were packed week-nights and Sundays. My regular work on the Sabbath was, twice in Victoria, morning and evening, and an afternoon appointment ten miles out, where I conducted a Sabbath-school, and held a preaching service immediately afterward. This was known as the White Mud Settlement, and here dwelt two typical men. One of these was John Norris, of gypsy origin in the Old Country, it was said, who came out as a lad in the Hudson's Bay service, by way of Hudson Bay, and had well assimilated the West during his long term of service. Now, as it was termed, he had "gone free," and was freighting and trading, and had grown quite prosperous. A hardy, tough specimen of humanity, a regular fighter with either fists or gun, it was all the same to Jack; withal a good-hearted man, fully amenable to kindly fellowship and Christian man-

hood. Father was to him a hero, one to be loved and pre-eminently respected. It was in Jack's house that we held our Sunday-school and after-service, and we were genuinely welcomed and all due preparations made for the comfort of both preacher and people. Mr. Norris is still living as I write, and has had a considerable part in the opening up of the North-West. Now in his ripening years he enjoys and well deserves the respect of the whole community.

The other man was from the north of Ireland, his Saxon origin fully revealed in the long flaxen hair, blue eyes and fair skin. He likewise was typical as an Irishman; language, wit, nervous impetuosity, all these he had to the full. He had crossed the continent in the early days; he had seen California when the gold fever was at its height, and had come north along the Pacific coast, through every mining camp; was in at the early days of Washington, Oregon and Montana, and now had settled for a time on the White Mud to take up farming. He had married and was, at the time of which I write, a useful citizen and an earnest worker in every department of local life. Sam Livingstone, or "Sam" as everybody called him, was, as I have said, a typical Irishman, and was taking on Americanism as fast as his nature admitted of his so doing. We can only move at a certain

rate in the process of development; anything faster is hurtful in the long run, indeed is often suicidal; and the philanthropist or government that does not recognize this has not watched history nor yet given much heed to either God's or Nature's method. Sam was taking on strength when conditions were favorable, but he lost quickly when these were reversed. To him, as to John Norris, father was a tower of strength. "The old man," as Sam and the frontiersmen generally termed father among themselves, "was one to swear by, you bet." Sam and many others pinned their faith to him. Just now, on his farm and alongside of a mission and such like influences, Sam was a host.

All through the Conference year of 1871-2 I was much in touch with the White Mud Settlement. Then there were Indian camps which I visited and ministered to, sometimes one day's journey distant, sometimes two days', making a four days' trip. During this winter, between November 1st and April 1st, I travelled by dog-train two thousand miles, and with horses one thousand, and yet was very little away from my work at Victoria; indeed, I seemed to stay at home much more than usual. The Mountain Fort, Pigeon Lake, Edmonton, White Fish Lake, Lac la Biche, and the Cree camps to the south near Battle River, gave me many short trips in

addition to my regular Sunday travelling to appointment. My dogs were fliers, my horses were fat and good travellers, and we got over the country in a hurry. Work there was in plenty, and very little time for play all through those long winter months.





## CHAPTER XIV.

Missionary Conference at Winnipeg announced—District Meeting moves me to Pigeon Lake—A “migratory church”—A hunt organized—We fall in with Blackfeet and Bloods—A time of great anxiety—Friendly overtures—My visit to Solomon’s camp—Good feeling established—A chief with Quaker instincts—Our party divides—We fall in with a Sarcee camp—I make friends with Chief Bull Head—Relief at meeting with large hunting party of our own people—A glorious buffalo run—Attack of fever—Off for Edmonton.

THE spring packet in March brought us word that during the coming summer a missionary conference would be held in the little village of Winnipeg; that the Rev. Drs. Punshon and Wood and other noted men would come that far west to attend it, and that the missionaries would be required to meet these august brethren. The Saskatchewan District Meeting, which took place during the winter, determined on some changes. Peter Campbell was to come to Victoria, and John McDougall to go to Pigeon Lake; and as the best time to move was in the early spring, both parties made ready to do so. These Mountain and Wood Stoneys and western Crees had petitioned the Chairman for “John,” and

the Chairman and the brethren thought this was the best disposition of our forces in sight; therefore, early in April, I sent my outfit of carts and material around by the south of the Beaver Hills, in charge of my man, Donald Whitford, a worthy fellow who had engaged with me for a year. Several lodges that had been wintering in the vicinity of Victoria accompanied the party back to Pigeon Lake.

Bidding my good sister-in-law and little daughters farewell, and with the company of my brother David as far as Edmonton, I took my buffalo runners, Bob No. 1, Archie and Tom, and started up on the north side of the river, visiting father and mother and friends at Edmonton, and then on to the lake, where I met many old friends. Here, too, I had a fine chance of joking the Dutchman, who had been my companion as I have related, on a trip the year before. I had not seen him since our parting during the night between here and Edmonton, and now, standing in the midst of a crowd of Indians and seeing him approach, I said, "Ah! and here comes the Dutchman! I left him last spring down the trail, and he is but now coming up!" All saw the point and laughed at the boastful little fellow.

Meetings and council, lecture and sermon, fishing and gardening, teaching and helping

other men to do so—thus the spring passed and our congregations grew, and we arranged to move out on the plains about the middle of May. Our camp numbered between forty and fifty lodges, largely Stoneys, with some Crees and a couple of camps of half-breeds. A moving village, a travelling school, a migratory church, we almost literally “nightly pitched our moving tent,” though not “a day’s march nearer home.” On and out through the beautiful valley of the Battle River, across many beaver dams, whose builders became our food *en passant*, and in ten days we had cut our poles and triangles and loaded with dry wood, and were again steadfastly facing the great plains. When camp was moving I generally was far in advance or away to one side. The camp might make from fifteen to twenty miles a day, but I rode from forty to sixty miles, exploring the country and thus keeping myself healthy in both mind and body. A short service every morning, weather permitting; a longer one at night, and practically all day Sunday; but between times away with some interesting hunter or good lively companion and changing these day by day, and thus we explored and hunted and travelled, and still this big land was before us.

Our route from the edge of the woods at this time was almost all new to me. We were days

travelling in a south-easterly direction before we found even a few straggling bulls; then, when we came to buffalo and began the work of making provisions, we fell in with a party of Blackfeet and Bloods. These were anxious to make peace; and this entailed a vast deal of visiting and receiving, which was all right in its place, yet took much time from what was our main purpose in coming out to these plains. With all native peoples time is not in question, and it was a part of our mission to make these people feel its value. Then there was the constant need of being on guard. These men professed a desire for peace just now, but there were many who only wanted the opportunity to make war; and thus, instead of taking your turn, as was the ordinary condition when travelling and hunting, while these alien camps were near us every man in our camp had to stand guard all the time, for the others outnumbered us ten to one. Moreover, the Bloods especially had come in from the Missouri recently and were well armed, while in our camp I was the only man with a breech-loading gun, and this not a "repeater." Moreover, these warriors had repeating rifles, mostly Henry's sixteen-shooters, and breech-loading revolvers, and plenty of fixed ammunition, all of which were new to us dwellers north of the forty-ninth parallel, and

we saw most clearly how much disadvantaged we were. But it did me good to note how carelessly my Stoneys carried themselves, armed as they were with only muzzle-loading, single-barrelled shotguns, and many of the young fellows with only bows and arrows. In spite of this they moved among these Plain Indians with their superior arms and superior numbers as if all this did not matter one whit; indeed, their whole air was one of pure unconcern. To me every man of the Stoneys seemed to say by his conduct, "Never mind numbers and guns; we can whip them anyway," and doubtless those cunning plainsmen had by experience found this out, and therefore were quite willing to act peaceably.

Here I met Sotanow, a leading Blood Chief, who, when I came to know him, furnished also a reason for this unexpected attitude. Sotanow, or "Rainy Chief," was a Quaker by instinct. He had fought many battles, but not of his own option or desire; he was amongst his fellows a brave man, but was always against war. And now when he met me as a "God-man," and one decidedly for peace, we became friends at once, and thus all his influence was thrown into the maintenance of peace while our camps were close to each other. He visited our camp with a large retinue, and he invited me to



his camp, so the next day with a half dozen Stoneys we rode over to return the chief's visit and to see his people.

Yesterday, when Sotanow and his following visited our camp it was pageantry and pomp and barbaric splendor, saddles and costumes, horses and men, in glorious array and wonderfully fitting display on the great plain; a wonderful environment, with its beautiful undulating surface, the sloping hill, the bending valley, the winding stream on the bank of which we were encamped, and the grass-covered hills in the distance. It was a sight to behold these aborigines in the bravery of paint and brass and cotton and blanket and buckskin and moose skin and buffalo skin, according to their own ideas of what was artistic and scenic and beautiful; and certainly they looked fine, and for place and purpose their horsemanship was without criticism. To our mountain and wood people their appearance was decidedly strange and impressive. To-day it is a small party of one white man and six Stoneys (half of the camp wanted to go with me, but I forbade them, knowing that it would not be well for us to thus divide our party), and our horses are plainly caparisoned and costumed, and our demeanor is quiet and unassuming, but we represent a distinct life and entirely different conditions. We

come as the forerunners of Christian civilization, and can afford to do without merely human numbers of pageantry or pomp ; nevertheless, we are met after a three hours' gallop by an escort, and amid growing numbers, falling into line with our approach, we draw near to this big camp, which, because of its position, we could not see until we were upon it. Already there are a hundred or more warriors surrounding us, and now coming to the top of the brae we see a large camp stretched at our feet.

It is a wonderful scene that now meets our gaze : the beautiful valley ; the hundreds and possibly thousands of horses singly and in bands everywhere ; the many white lodges, tasselled and bedecked and gorgeous with the hieroglyphics descriptive of glorious exploits ; women and children seemingly without number. On horseback and on foot, and through lanes of curious spectators gazing upon us, we are escorted to the chief's lodge, where we are ushered in and welcomed by Sotanow, who introduces us to the assembled aristocracy of his camp. Seating ourselves, we look around at the faces we now see for the first time.

Right here we met (not for the first time, however) with a piece of sublime presumption. The chief had been on the lookout for an interpreter for me, and an old fellow who had pro-

fessed to be a great linguist was brought in and began speaking to me in what was only a mumbling of unintelligible sounds. I shook my head, and again he tried with an attempt at other sounds, but again I shook my head, and after a few more futile attempts the crowd laughingly dismissed the fraud and the chief sought for another interpreter. This time he was successful in finding a woman who understood Cree very well. She did not speak it as well as she understood it, because of lack of practice, but I soon found that she would make a good interpreter, and through her I spoke to those wild men.

By this time the sides of the lodge were lifted and a big crowd had pressed in all around to listen to the speaker, who told them where he came from and the conditions there; why he was here, and who sent him thus afar and among strange and distinct peoples. I dwelt largely on the benefits of peace; spoke of the future and of the inevitable change soon to come; told them that now the land was without government men did as they pleased, but the day was near when murder and wrong and theft would be stopped, and that the power to do this would, at the same time, be all-powerful and all-merciful. They need not fear the future so long as they aimed at doing the right thing between one

another and all men ; also that this great power coming would make no distinctions, the white man and the Indian of every tribe and nation would stand the same before it ; there would be no favoritism whatever ; this was the Great Spirit's wish, this was what His Word enjoined ; we were brethren, and the land was big and we could all dwell in it in peace. There were in my audience many who had every reason to hate the white man ; every better instinct in them had been insulted and beaten down by the selfishness of the white man ; wrong and injury and bestiality and crime had they suffered from his hands ; moreover, their idea of the white man's government was of a ruthless, despotic, absolute power breaking treaties, hounding men hither and thither, building prisons and erecting gallows. Oh ! these liberty-loving people hated the very mention of government. But to-day, if what I said was true, and some of them had heard that " John " told the truth, then there was hope for them as a people.

My interpreter, she who was once a captive and now had been bought by her present husband, who was also the husband of three other women, as I found out by asking her, was glad to again listen to the tones of her own mother-tongue, and also to listen and be a party to such a message. She modestly thanked me, but I

said it was my part to be grateful and hoped we might again meet.

The chief spoke after me, and the woman gave to me what he said as follows: "My people, you see now why I asked John to come to our camp. I saw he was different, and when he spoke to me I felt this is indeed 'God's man.' I must listen, and I heard good things which touched my heart, and now you have heard him also. Let us remember, oh, my people, and try and be ready for the change which John says is coming. He tells me that there are many white men like him who are the friends of the red man, who wish us well and will help us to a better future. I long for it, I am tired of war and hatred, I am glad to hear John, and from this out I will count him as my friend and brother."

They gave us food and poured in questions while we ate, and after spending some three hours in their camp we asked for our horses and these were brought up. The chief said: "I am coming again to see you; I will come almost alone, for I want to hear more of your talk, John." And now, feeling that, after all, our ride over and sojourn in this camp for a little time might result in good, I rode away on the jump for the home camp, carrying within me a thankful heart.

True to his word, the chief came over and



spent a night in our camp. He was full of questions, and I did what I could to enlighten him, and when he had returned to his own people we moved away into another part of the country that we might the sooner find buffalo sufficient to ensure loads of provisions. In this we were fairly successful. The Stoneys and Crees were fully loaded, and as the buffalo had been in small bands passing us into the north they were anxious to march woodward. My plan was, when we were loaded, to let my man Donald accompany the Indians into Pigeon Lake, and I take the straight course to Edmonton to join my father there and go on with him to Winnipeg to the missionary conference; but before our carts were nearly full the Indians became anxious, and I concluded to let them go, while my own party and a couple of lodges of half-breeds would move slowly in, picking up buffalo and loading as we might be able to do. So on a Sunday afternoon I told the assembled camp what I proposed, and suggested that they move in as they wished on the morrow. They expressed anxiety about us, but I told them we would be very careful, and after a general prayer-meeting it was thus arranged that we should part on the morrow.

Monday morning there was much hand-shaking, and in a few hours, as our start had been simultaneous, there were many miles

between us. We found a few buffalo the same afternoon, and, securing some meat, concluded to move on until finding a suitable camp we would dry our provisions, make pemmican, and bale our meat. We were moving northward when suddenly we found ourselves almost into a camp coming from the east. The first man to reach us was Bull Head, the Sarcee chief, and I was glad when I found that he could talk some Cree and we were able to converse. Here we were, a very few, with a crowd of the wildest fellows on the plains in sight. "What shall we do?" asked my men; and as I saw that our lines of march were convergent, I said to Bull Head, "We will camp together, my friend," and now his solemn look disappeared, and with a smile he said, "I am glad to hear you say so;" and in an hour or two we found our three lodges surrounded by some thirty lodges of Sarcees, and with the not wholly pleasing intelligence that as many more would join us on the morrow. I felt queer, and wished in my heart that we had stayed with the Stoneys. So far as man was concerned, we were fully in the hands of these fellows; what they might do was the question. My brother George was quite afraid of them, and no wonder, for here were some of the hardest and wildest-looking men to be seen anywhere. I resolved to cultivate Bull Head; he was a big fellow and

evidently very impulsive. Just now he was, or seemed to be, on our side. With him I walked through the camp, and when his lodge was fully set I went with him into it, and soon a crowd collected. As the Sarcees were a buffer people between the Crees and Blackfeet, and could understand Cree and speak it some, I told them pretty much what I had told the Bloods. Some of them laughed when I said we were brothers, but all were reverent when I spoke of the Great Spirit.

In the evening my men asked me what we would do with our horses. I said, "We will give them into the care of the chief." I then went to him and told him we were few, he was many; we were really his guests, and I wanted him to take charge of our camp, and especially of our horses, and again that peculiar smile lit up his big face. I returned to my tent and went to sleep beside my little brother, and when daylight came and the camp noise made me fully conscious of surroundings, I was almost surprised that we were alive. In going out I could not see any of our horses, but, walking to the outskirts of the encampment, I recognized them coming in ahead of a rider, and on near approach was astonished to see Bull Head himself on one of my runners, he having relieved his young men and taken charge of our horses himself. As he

came up he smiled and said, "I suppose you thought, John, that your horses were stolen," and I answered, "No, Chief, I slept in your camp just as I would expect you to sleep in my house. The one Great Father watched over us all, for are we not His children?" Again the smile, "Do you think so, John?" and I gave an emphatic "Yes." "Well, I like that," said this man whose hand had hitherto been against every man's.

Soon the other part of the Sarcee camp came up, and here was a multiplying of the problem as to our future movements. Evidently there had been a split in camp, and now we were to be made the occasion of mending the breach. Were we to be the common prey, or might we be the instruments of healing in the case? The morning passed anxiously and things to us were growing tense, when in came some scouts with the startling intelligence that within a few miles there was a large camp of half-breeds and Crees from the north—many carts, a big ring, very many lodges. And now there was apprehension on the part of the Sarcees, and I saw that our time had come to take the lead; so when Bull Head hurried over to tell me, I at once said, "Let us down tents and go over to them and join forces with them." He looked surprised, but I continued, "They are my friends. I give

my word, Chief, all will be well." This seemed to satisfy him, and turning with stately stride towards his lodge he shouted forth the news and announced the programme to "down lodges and make ready to travel with John to the big camp; John has given his word that all will be well." I can assure my readers the announcement was welcome to my own party, and soon camp was astir with preparations for the march. At the head of the column, along with Bull Head and some of his leading braves of both factions, we rode towards our friends, and in three or four hours came in sight of a large camp. Then I said to my man Donald, "I will ride ahead and announce our coming." What I had in hand was a rather ticklish business; here were life-long enemies, hereditary foes, cherishing deep-rooted hatred and long unsatisfied revenge; no government, no law but such as we might make convenient for ourselves for the moment. I confess I was sobered at the work I had undertaken. However, I galloped on and into the camp, where I was welcomed on every hand. Very soon, to my great relief, I was surrounded by leading half-breeds and Indians whom I knew, such men as Kakake, and John Hunter, and our own people from Victoria and White Fish Lake, and I sat on my horse and told them that I had the whole Sarcee camp with



me. "These are my friends," I said; "will you truly accept them as such?" "Yes, yes," they replied. Then I said, "Let some of you go out to meet them, and others arrange where they shall camp," and on every hand I met the response, "Yes, it shall be done." I alighted from my horse, and with a circle of friends around me entered Kakake's lodge, feeling that a burden was rolled from my mind.

When the Sarcees were all encamped and our tents were in place, we engaged in a rousing song service, which made the Sarcees and many others look and listen and wonder. Then with a heart full of gratitude I lay me down and slept, while my little brother, why, he was another boy altogether. Alarm, distrust, fear, which had been plainly written on his face, were gone, and peaceful calm had taken their place. Donald was with his people, and a strong sense of security had taken possession of all our minds. We found that just west of us was the fringing of a large herd of buffalo; that for days this camp had lain quiet in that direction, and that the morrow was set for a grand hunt.

On the morrow when we rode forth, an immense company, Crees, Saulteaux, French and English half-breeds, Sarcees, and one white man, on all manner of horses, and clothed in all manner of costumes, and with all manner of weapons,

and many of our crowd painted in all manner of colors, we made a wonderful appearance. Behind us came carts and waggons and pack-horses and many riders and drivers, and in strong array we went forth to "slay and eat." The ground was good, the country not too hilly, and the buffalo sufficiently plenty to give room for pick and choice. Moreover, the day was almost calm. Oh! the conditions were ideal for a hunt with such a crowd. The charge was magnificent. While many fell, so far as I could learn none were seriously hurt, and hundreds of buffalo were killed. Long before night many thousands of pounds of meat were in the camp and undergoing the various processes of slicing and drying, etc.; also hundreds of hides were being stretched, these in their turn to undergo the treatment necessary to make tents and clothes, moccasins and harness, provisions, saddle-bags, etc.

Of course, with this large camp of diverse people my work was much increased, and I was kept constantly on the go; it was "John" here and "John" there almost day and night. Then I was taken with some kind of fever, and lay for a day or two between life and death. Oh! how I longed for cold water. The Indian women did all they could for me; indeed, the whole camp was full of sympathy; they did not move

for six days, waiting for me to gain strength. Moreover, the time was now approaching for me to strike for Edmonton to join father and start for Winnipeg. I was extremely anxious, but there was nothing to do but let the fever take its course.

When Sunday came I was better, but could do no more than sit beside John Hunter as he led the service. In the evening, however, I was so much better that I felt I could venture on my journey, so I told the people of the coming conference in Winnipeg, and of the purpose thereof, and bade them good-bye. Next day with Susa (whom my readers will remember as the man I had disinfected of the small-pox) driving a cart, and my brother George and self in the saddle behind some loose horses, we left the camp and started straight for Edmonton. Sarcees, Crees, half-breeds all wished us "bon voyage," and the Christian people said, "We will pray for your safe return and many blessings on your journey. Carry our greetings to the Praying Chiefs and the Christian people you will see; also tell the "Law Chief" at Red River we hope he will not allow any fire-water to come west to us.

## CHAPTER XV.

Visit at Edmonton—Starting for Conference—"Eight hundred miles to do shopping"—Travelling expenses—Buy a fine horse—On the fringe of settlement—Arrival at Winnipeg—Missionary Conference opened—Distinguished deputation—Entertained by Sir Donald A. Smith—Rev. Wm. Morley Punshon's lectures and ordination sermon—I am ordained—Dr. Moore and Dr. Cochrane—Am appointed to a new mission—Government survey party arrives in Winnipeg—Dr. Grant's "Ocean to Ocean"—Affectionate tribute to my father.

OUR course to Edmonton lay nearly due northwest. Crossing the Nose Hills on their western slope, ferrying the Battle River at its southerly bend, rolling up the north bank of this magnificent valley, we made good progress, and on Friday morning, leaving Susa and George with the cart and loose horses, I pushed on alone and in the evening stood once more on the bank of the river with Edmonton and the new mission in welcome sight before me. Hailing the first man I saw on the other side, he crossed over to me with a skiff, and, unsaddling, I led my horse as he swam at the stern of the boat, then mounting him rode on to my friends, by whom I was abundantly welcomed.

Father had been waiting rather impatiently

for me; already the Rev. Peter Campbell and Mr. Steinhauer had gone from Victoria and White Fish Lake. If we started Monday morning we would be eight days, and possibly a hundred miles or more, behind them. I said I expected my boys and horses in Saturday night, and (D.V.) would be ready for the road as early as he wished Monday morning, and that if I were not mistaken the advance party would not reach Winnipeg before us. George and Susa came in late Saturday evening and we barely got them across by dark. I had a two days' visit with parents and sisters and my own two little daughters, Ruth and Gussie, whom I found at Edmonton, and was busily engaged helping father make ready for Monday morning. I took one of the services on Sunday, drove with father to an afternoon appointment, where I again spoke in Cree, and Monday morning we were away once more; father and self in a single-horse buckboard in the lead, Susa with cart next, and brother George in the saddle driving up the loose horses, of which we took nine with us.

The first two days were easy travel, as we wanted to camp and visit with my sister-in-law, Annie, and also my own little girl, Flora. We found these well and flourishing, and anxiously expecting my brother David back from Winni-



peg, whither he had gone to trade some months since. Eight hundred miles to do your shopping, and the mode of travel heavily laden carts, with the privilege of bridging the small streams and making boats wherewith to ferry the larger ones as you journey—only the real pioneer will brave such hardships.

Next morning we were away early, and now we really began to move. Father had said, "Now, John, you are chief transport officer of the brigade," and I thereupon took charge of the journey. Early and late we bowled across country, not with rapid step but with a steady, continuous, up-hill-and-down-dale-all-day jog. At daybreak I sprang for the horses, while father, Susa and George pulled down the tent and had things packed away by the time I was back; then each man harnessed and saddled, and we were off. In three hours, if we had water and grass and wood, we stopped to camp, and the first move was to off-harness, turn the horse loose, and put the lines on the next to be used. There is no more propitious time to catch a horse than when you first come in from the road; if you leave your horse until it is time to start, many a usually quiet horse will, just for the fun of it, keep you running after it for a while, thus using up valuable time. I never took such chances when I was really travelling.

Within the hour we were always away again, and with fresh horses, freshly oiled rigs, and mending done up to time, we kept our speed and run, and our night camps were far apart. Thousands of homesteads will dot the land we are passing in our day's journey, and which now is solitude sublime. This whole land is waiting, God has not yet touched the button which will switch the trend of humanity this way. Nevertheless, I firmly believe He will do so in good time.

Passing down the valley of the Saskatchewan, George and I ride into Fort Pitt, while father and Susa go straight on by Onion Lake and Frenchman's Butte. Here I bought a horse, born and bred on the spot, and there is no better horse or stock range in Canada than in the vicinity of Fort Pitt. A magnificent brown, a gem of horseflesh, was this purchase of mine; old Mr. Roland was famous for his horses. It was dark when we caught up to our camp that night. "Hello! another horse?" said father, and in the morning when he saw him he said, "He'll do," and now we had three changes and one to spare, and on we rolled. Crossing the river at Carlton we drove by Duck Lake and crossed the south branch at Batoche. Our horses had swum the two big rivers, and now we rolled faster than ever. Our stock was

settling down to work, regular hours, regular step, and they were hardening to their business, which was to travel about seventy miles a day, rain or shine. Six days of such work and the glorious Sabbath was a much appreciated institution. From the waning of Saturday evening unto the dawning of Monday's morn we rested, unless at some fort or settlement. Horses ate and drank or rolled and rested; men ate and drank, and read and prayed a little, and slept a lot. This was really to the Sabbath-keeping "pony express traveller" a genuine restoration day, and thus on this trip we used it and most thoroughly enjoyed God's wise and beneficent provision for man and beast.

When still about three hundred miles out from Winnipeg we met my brother David and party. David had with him my aunt and her husband, the Rev. Benj. Jones, a pair of genuine nomads. This was but another of their moves, the Saskatchewan being their present goal. We spent a part of a day in visiting with these friends. Here, too, we caught up with the rest of our western missionary folk, Messrs. Steinhauer, Campbell and Snider. Eight days and one hundred miles of a shorter distance—indeed, so far as my horses were concerned, there were three hundred miles of a shorter distance—and when we compared stock our animals were in

far better condition than theirs, showing conclusively that regular hours and regular speed of travel are the best methods in long journeys. From thence on we took the lead, and crossing the Assiniboine and Bird Tail rivers, we passed Shoal Lake and the Little Saskatchewan, and not until we came to Rat Creek, now called Burnside, did we find the homes of the first settlers. Nine hundred and more miles we had travelled through a great farm, and not a farmer to break the virgin sod!

From this on into the little village of Winnipeg there was a fringing of settlement, and it was amusing to listen to Susa and little brother George discussing the people we saw. Every little while George would gallop up to ask me about the folk we passed or met, "Who are they, brother John? Where are they going?" and such like questions from Susa as well. They seemed fully to expect me to know everybody and everybody's business. I told them that we were only now coming to people, and these were but as few compared to those farther east, at which their astonishment was very great.

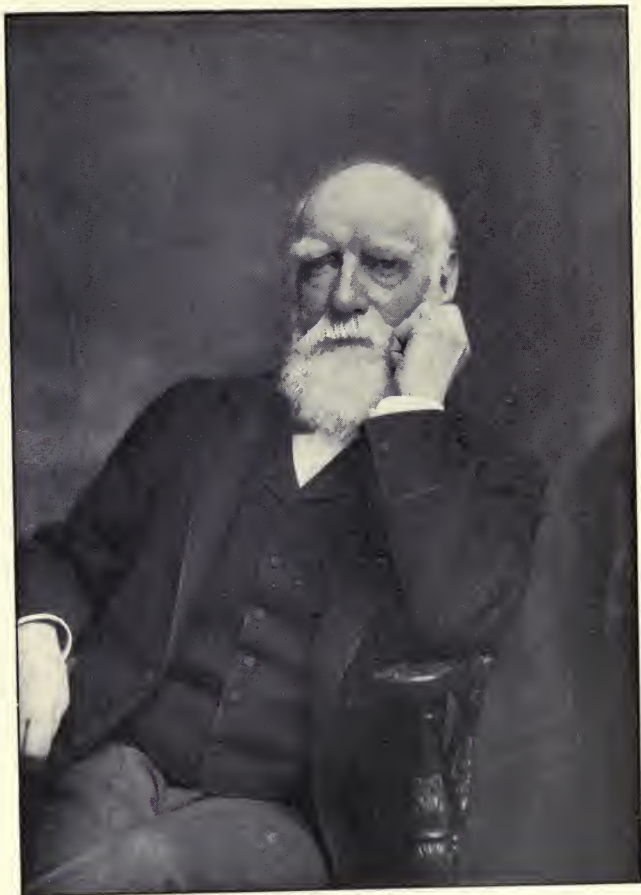
Somewhere about Poplar Point we met the Revs. George Young and Dr. Enoch Wood, who were driving as far as the Portage and would follow us down to Winnipeg. From both these

brethren we had a hearty welcome. Driving on down the north side of the Assiniboine, we approached Winnipeg and Fort Garry. I had not been here since 1864. Eight years had made some change, but still the mass of Canadians—to say nothing about the rest of the world—were lamentably ignorant of this most fertile land. We camped outside the small cluster of buildings called Winnipeg, and found willows for camp-fire and grass and water for horses. No billeting committee in those days! On Mother Earth, as indeed for years, we now ate and laid us down and slept. We found we were ahead of both the eastern and northern contingents. In a day or two these arrived, those from the east by river steamer and those from the north by York boat.

All being now gathered, the first Missionary Conference west of Lake Superior was opened in due time and in due form. Representing the far East there came the Rev. Drs. Punshon and Wood and John Macdonald, Esq. Resident in the Red River Settlement were Revs. George Young, Michael Fawcett, and Messrs. Robson and Bowerman. From the north there came the Rev. Egerton R. Young, and from the west the Revs. George McDougall, H. B. Steinhauer, Peter Campbell, and myself. The whole work was gone over in review and plans laid for the







LORD STRATHCONA AND MOUNT ROYAL.

future. Dr. Punshon and Mr. Macdonald were the guests of Sir Donald A. Smith (now Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal) at "Silver Heights," some miles up the Assiniboine, to which hospitable home we were all invited for a visit and dinner one afternoon. Sir Donald, even in the early seventies, was noted for his princeliness of hospitality, and he, as also the great company he represented, did honor to our Conference in many ways. And to men of quick perception like Sir Donald Smith here were citizens worthy of honor: Dr. Punshon, the prince of orators, and President of the Methodist Conference; Dr. Wood, the venerable General Secretary of Missions; George Young, than whom no church had a fitter representative and foundation-builder for the establishing of the Redeemer's kingdom in a new country; Henry Steinhauer, who had now spent many years of hard toil on frontier missions as teacher, interpreter, translator, intense missionary, himself a monument of missionary enterprise. My own father was in the number, a pioneer from childhood, a patriot prophet, the frontiersman and red man's friend. These were indeed worthy of all honor, and Sir Donald willingly gave them homage.

It was a great treat for the lone settlement up in the heart of the Dominion to have the great

preacher and lecturer, Wm. Morley Punshon, to electrify and stimulate and inspire with his world-famous lectures, "The Men of the *Mayflower*," and "Daniel in Babylon," and his wonderful sermon Sunday morning, at the close of which I was the whole of the ordination class. My examinations were summed up in the one question given to me by Dr. Punshon the previous evening, "Are you ready, John, for your ordination to-morrow morning?" and my brief answer seemed to satisfy the Doctor. No oral or written examination, nor yet trial sermon, was exacted; I was taken as I was on the merits of my twelve years' missionary work in the north and west. But if there is anything in the laying on of hands, then I was especially privileged with those of Drs. Punshon and Wood and the two Georges, Young and McDougall, laid on my head.

The first Grace Church was not sufficient for these things, and the Hudson's Bay Company cleared out its large warehouse on the bank of the Assiniboine, and having handsomely decorated it with cloth and bunting, and arranged it with improvised seats, "Daniel in Babylon" was listened to by a mixed multitude which had gathered in from the whole country. Sir Donald occupied the chair, and with him on the platform was the Lieutenant-Governor. To me

after twelve years in the wilderness these gatherings were a feast indeed. Susa looked and wondered; George was dumb-founded, and for a time forgot both Cree and English!

Twice during those days I was interviewed concerning the west country and its future, and also as to its present inhabitants. The Rev. Drs. Moore and Cochrane, of the Presbyterian Church, put me through a catechism which was by no means the "shorter," and then the Lieutenant-Governor sent for me, and again I was questioned closely as to the great West and its people. I suppose it was conceded that even at that time I had travelled over the Saskatchewan valley more than any one of our missionaries, and the others referred those who were inquiring about land and people to myself as to an authority; and for my part, I was indeed glad to bear witness to both Church and State as to the country and its needs. This Missionary Conference decided on the opening of a new mission in the wild country along the mountains. The site was as yet undetermined and left largely to the Chairman of the District and the Missionary in charge of the work. It was also decided that Bro. John McDougall should undertake this mission. Thus I found myself facing a difficult and dangerous problem, for even the Hudson's Bay Company had been forced to



withdraw from that country in the days gone by; and because of the lawless condition of the territories to the south of us, the Indian tribes were now worse in every respect than at any earlier date. Smuggling and whiskey and fearful demoralization were now general. Nevertheless, I felt much honored with the appointment.

While we were in Winnipeg a distinguished party arrived *en route* across the continent, among whom were Mr. (now Sir Sandford) Fleming, Dr. Grant (later Principal of Queen's University), and Messrs. Macoun and Horetsky. This was a Government party sent out for the purpose of taking a look over the country on the line proposed for the Canadian Pacific Railway. The world was moving, and at last our Government was awaking to some sense of the importance of the great West. We, who knew a little about the land, were glad to welcome this party. Father and Susa and George returned with them to Edmonton, and they would fain have urged father to go on in their company to the Coast, but he could not spare the time from his work.

The experiences of this transcontinental journey furnished Dr. Grant with the material for his book, "From Ocean to Ocean," and I may be pardoned if I quote from this interesting

volume a passage in which Dr. Grant, describing the difficulties of travel on the plains, takes the opportunity to pay an affectionate tribute to my father. "In the afternoon drive," he writes, "the big Carlton waggon, drawn by the span, broke down. The iron bolt connecting the fore wheels with the shaft broke in two. Shaganappi had been sufficient for every mishap hitherto, but this seemed too serious a case for it; but, with the ready help of Mr. McDougall, shaganappi triumphed, and we were delayed only an hour. No one ever seems non-plussed on the plains; for every man is a jack-of-all-trades, and accustomed to makeshifts. When an axle broke, the men would hand out a piece of white birch, shape it into something like the right thing, stick it in, tie it with shaganappi, and be jogging on at the old rate before a professional carriage builder could have made up his mind what was best to be done. Mr. McDougall in particular was invaluable. In every difficulty we called upon him, and he never failed us. He would come up with his uniform, sober, pleasant look, take in the bearings of the whole case, and decide promptly what was to be done. He was our *deus ex machina*. Dear old fellow-traveller! how often you are in our thoughts! Your memory is green in the hearts of every one who ever travelled with you."

## CHAPTER XVI.

Conference over, I leave on a visit to Ontario.—Dr. Punshon—Passing the Customs—A stubborn Jehu—Northern Railroad at Moorehead—Take steamer at Duluth—Revisiting scenes of my boyhood—Collingwood—Craigvale—Toronto—College education denied—My second marriage—Westward bound—Seasickness—A “wild and woolly” town—Heading off a steamer—Down the Red River—Dr. Bryce—Westward rush begun—A merited rebuke.

A FEW days sufficed for our missionary gathering, and presently we were away, I to join the eastern party and visit for a few weeks the scenes of my childhood. This was pleasant in prospect, but when I had the privilege of travelling in the company of such men as Drs. Punshon and Wood and Mr. John Macdonald, it was to me a greatly prized opportunity. We embarked on the *International* at Fort Garry, and soon were stemming the muddy, sluggish current of the Red. It was a sultry afternoon, and Dr. Punshon, bitten on the hand by a lively mosquito, came to me in his trouble; not only because of the pain and swelling, but also to inquire as to the ineffectuality of the mosquito netting he had on his hat. Said this learned



REV. ENOCH WOOD, D.D.

HON. SENATOR JOHN MACDONALD.

REV. WM. MORLEY PUNSHON, D.D.

REV. GEORGE MCDUGALL.

REV. GEORGE YOUNG, D.D.





man, "I took the precaution of purchasing some netting, and a lady friend arranged it on my hat nicely; but it seems of no avail against these pests." I told him that all the netting in sight arranged as his was would be of no avail; and then, ripping it from its artistic setting on his hat, and borrowing needle and thread from the stewardess, I made the netting into a sack which came down over the Doctor's head and neck, and told him to put on his gloves and fear no more. He was greatly astonished and most grateful, and wondered that he had not thought of this earlier. The Doctor was full of questions concerning the West, and as we were standing together on the steamer's deck looking out on the plains of the Red River valley, he suddenly asked me how many horses I had. I straightway began to count up on my fingers: there were Moose Hair and Jack and Little Bob and Archie, and the two Browns, and Beaso, and Wahbee, etc., until I had twelve, that I told him if he knew anything about horses he could either ride or pack or drive, and that I had some unbroken mares and colts running at large on the range. "My, what a stud for a preacher!" was his exclamation, and as he was a big, stout, heavy man, I drew up a little closer to His Bigness and said, "If you had my work to do, Dr. Punshon, you would require seventy

times as many as I have." Then he laughed and said, "That is true, John, and I do not mind if you have a thousand so long as you do your work."

At the boundary line we met the Customs officer. My party, desiring to go ashore, left their keys with me and asked me to look after their baggage. With us but not of us was a tall man named Snider, who came and put his carpet-bag beside my pile, but I moved it away and suggested that he had better look after his own luggage. When the Customs House officer came I stood beside my stack of valises and grips, and jingled a half dozen bunches of keys in my hand, ready to open everything if need be. "Who do these belong to?" he inquired. "To those gentlemen you met on the gangway and myself," I answered, and he chalked them through without the opening of a single one. "Whose is this?" was the next question, pointing to the carpet-bag I had fortunately moved away from our heap. "Mine," said the tall man. "Open it," came the command, and the tall man opening his bag, the officer put his hands in down to the bottom and brought up a nice bundle of martin skins, and quietly putting them under his arm, moved on. The tall man was visibly disturbed at this confiscation, and I read him a lesson on attempting to smuggle. I

was glad enough that I had moved that bag from our belongings.

Reaching Grand Forks we were told that the boat would go no farther, and that all passengers would now proceed by waggon. Behold us, then, in a little while crowded into high-seated, low-covered, springless waggons. Here, while looking after the luggage of my friends, the Doctors, I was crowded out of their company and jammed into that of a strange lot of fellow-passengers. As we rode over the rough prairie trail the jolting was terrific. To sit with heads bowed and legs dangling in the air was growing to be something like purgatory, and I very soon began to agitate for a change. By taking out the top sides of the box and lowering our seats that much, we might make ourselves passably comfortable, but when I mentioned this to the driver he at once with an oath declared, "You shall do no such thing." I persisted in my demand, but still the stubborn driver refused. However, at the first stop we made I had my men ready, and we adjusted the seats while the driver was looking after his horses. On his return he was furious, but I gently told him not to worry, and assured him that we could go on without him, even if we had to leave him bound hand and foot to do so. Seeing we were in earnest, and that all his cursing and fuming

would be futile, he gave up, and before the day was over had to admit that my plan was the best. To Dr. Punshon that long day under such circumstances was excruciating.

At dusk we crossed the Red River at Georgetown, where more than twelve years before father and our party had camped for some days when we were *en route* into the north. We still had twelve or fourteen miles to do before reaching the railroad at Moorehead, and had it not been for Mr. Macdonald's forethought we would have hung around an atmosphere of smoke and mosquitoes for hours; but he had telegraphed for a waggon for our party, and there it was standing and ready for us. However, we were very hungry, and on inquiring were told by the big German who owned the place we were stopping at that they had no food cooked. Then Mr. Macdonald asked if they had bread, and the answer came back, "Oh! yes." Again he asked if they had milk. "Oh! yes." "Then please give us some bread and milk," and soon down to big bowls of milk and chunks of bread we sat to satisfy our present hunger. The long afternoon over a rough prairie road in a springless heavy waggon had given us large appetites.

Our homely fare disposed of, we climbed into the lumber waggon and again set forth into the summer's night. Crossing Buffalo Creek we

took the long level plain for Moorehead and the railroad. Every man in the party tried his turn on John, the driver, to induce him to trot even a wee bit, but it was no go. John's horses walked, and continued to walk, and it was not till the early morn of the next day that we entered the new railway town, just as one of the dance halls was turning its crowd into the streets. On hearing them Dr. Punshon remarked drily, that "those young fellows had evidently been to Sunday-school." We found that the train left at 5 a.m., and arranging to be called early enough for a cup of coffee, we lay down for an hour or two to sleep. Here once more I heard the whistle of a locomotive. Twelve years and better had passed since I left the northerly railhead at La Crosse, on the Mississippi. Steadily northward steam and steel had since then been forcing their way. Twelve years in the wilderness, but now I am in touch with all the world!

Sharp at five we were away, speeding behind the iron horse, and to me for a time the sensation was delightful. "Come with me, John," said Dr. Punshon, and he led the way into another car and presented me to a company of railway magnates, who soon satisfied themselves of my "bona-fides," and straightway the questions came thick and fast concerning the



Canadian North-West. I noticed that it was extremely gratifying to these men to learn that far north of their line there were vast areas of fertile country. They thanked me most heartily, and then pressed Dr. Punshon to come to St. Paul and give them a lecture on his way home. This he consented to do, and left us at Duluth for St. Paul. At Brainard we were held up by a subsidence in the road east of us, and after some hours' waiting were taken to the spot and transferred to another train. I remember Dr. Punshon was very anxious about this muskeg, and I had to pilot him across the floating bog at the side of the track. The whole bottom had fallen out under the dump—indeed it was all dump.

On down the slope of Superior we rolled, and into the new port of Duluth, where the good ship *Cumberland*, with steam up, was awaiting our train. From the hurricane deck of a cayuse to that of a palatial side-wheeler was a big translation, and for a change I liked it so long as the lake was placid, and such it proved as we coasted down the north shore of Lake Superior. We touched at Port Arthur, Nepigon, and Michipicoten, then on to the "Soo," where I stopped over one boat to meet some old friends of my boyhood and renew my youth with them among the scenes of various canoe and Mackinaw boat experi-

ences. I also visited Garden River, where, with father and mother and little brother and sisters, we had landed amongst wild drunken Indians twenty years before. I stood on the spot where as a lad I had driven the oxen which hauled the timber to build the first mission house and church. I crossed to Sugar Island and visited the churches, and found both still alive and active. It was like old times to hear Mrs. Church exclaim, "Why, Johnnie McDougall!" "Oh, how you talk!" "You don't say so," etc., etc. Generous and good as neighbors to all of us they were in those early days.

Coming back to the "Soo," and while walking on the dock, I met a couple of gentlemen passengers, and at the first glance knew them to be Hudson's Bay Company officers. A feeling of gladness came over me as I recognized the stamp of the north and west in their walk and talk and actions, and soon I was as one of them, though we had never met previously. I learned in course of an interesting conversation that they were on their way into the wilds of northern Quebec.

I caught the next boat down on the Canadian side, and from the deck feasted my eyes on the scenery of the old North Shore route. Calling in at the Bruce Mines and at Little Current and Killarney, and crossing the wide stretches of

Georgian Bay, we came into the port of Collingwood, where I bade farewell to my Hudson's Bay Company friends. From Collingwood I took train to Craigvale, where I expected to find my uncles and cousins, as also other friends. Allandale, Barrie, Lake Simcoe, all familiar, and it seems but as yesterday when I was paddling a birch canoe along these shores; and yet more than twelve years of continuous travel and toil have passed, and many hardships and countless adventures and perils have been experienced, and the boy has grown to manhood. "Will my old playmates recognize me?" I ask myself, and as I walk from the station to uncle's store and home, I am all on the strain in the excitement of coming home again, and full of the sense that this is indeed "my own, my native land."

Entering the store I saw my cousin Charlie waiting on customers, and I stood as one waiting his turn. People came and went whom I had known, but I was as a stranger amongst them. Fully an hour passed and I was not recognized, but after many glances from Charlie he at last got a glimpse of me as of old, and dropping everything he exclaimed, "Are you John McDougall?" I nodded ready assent, and then my welcome was hearty, and presently aunt and other cousins were around me as one from the dead.

A short sojourn with these relatives, and then on to Toronto, where I called on my fellow-travellers, Drs. Punshon and Wood and Mr. Macdonald. I also met the Rev. Lachlan Taylor, Secretary of Missions, and was gently reminded by both President and General Secretary that my time in Ontario was short. They also advised me to look around for a companion, and indeed were very solicitous on my behalf. A personal matter, that even my own father had never presumed to mention or converse with me about, these wise old men were quite insistent upon! However, I had my own thoughts in the case, and now it came upon me strongly that I would like to attend college for the year, and immediately I went to the President, but was met with a prompt refusal. "No, sir," he said, "you must return; your work needs you. A college education is not an essential, it is a luxury; neither we nor you can afford it." Thus Dr. Punshon met me with kindness yet firmness, and though longing for the college, yet my recent vows of obedience were also ringing in my ears, so I gave up the matter and settled down to visit and enjoy my short sojourn in eastern Canada. Nevertheless, Dr. Wood must insist on my visiting one of our missions where a *protégé* of his was teaching school; but Providence had something else in store for me. I found that there

would be no boat to this special point for some days, and therefore took another in an entirely different direction, and while on this trip met a young lady who made me say to myself, "If I can win her consent she shall go with me to the North-West!"

The next time I visited Toronto Dr. Wood was very anxious to know how I found the people at the isolated mission, and expressed surprise when I told him I had not been there. "Well, well," said he, "you must hurry up; the season is advancing and the distance is great." The Doctor knew a little about it, for he had gone as far west as Portage la Prairie. Then I told him I was advancing slowly and wisely from my standpoint, and he said, "Go ahead, young man." And in good time I did go on with my project and was successful, and late in September we were married. My bride, poor girl, little thought of the long, difficult journey on which I was taking her, nor yet, describe as I might, did she nor many other of the eastern people realize the conditions. But in her case it was "Will go with you, John, to the ends of the earth if need be."

We were married at Cape Rich, and sailed from Collingwood on the *Chicora*, calling at Owen Sound on the way. Instead of my bride only I found myself at the head of a little party bound



for the Red River, including portions of two families who expected to find their complement in the far West. We left Owen Sound some time after midnight, and soon were out in a gale on the wide stretch of the bay. My wife proved to be a much better sailor than myself. She and a few others went to breakfast, while I and the majority had no special desire for breaking fast. There were some jokes and fun at my expense. One young lady thought it was great fun that she on her first trip should do better than "a veteran like Mr. McDougall." I said little, but kept on the broad of my back. After a time, the ship continuing to roll and pitch, I noticed the young lady paling a little, and presently she also stretched herself out on the opposite side of the saloon. Then I opened conversation; it was my turn to laugh. "So you enjoyed your breakfast?" "Yes," faintly. "You've had a turn on the deck?" "Yes," more faintly. "Do you know what they are going to have for dinner?" "No," in a whisper. "It is now 11.30, are you hungry?" "No," with pathos and much feeling. All of a sudden my young lady jumped up and rushed for her stateroom, uttering a distressed "Oh, my! oh, my!" etc. For the rest of the trip we christened the complaint which affected our passenger list the "Oh, my!" disease. However, in a few hours we were in

the straits of Killarney, and our agony was over, and not until we reached Lake Superior was there much chance for further seasickness. Given comfortable ship and agreeable companions, with weather not too rough, and the North Shore route is a most enjoyable trip; the scenery is fine, and the whole run is pleasant.

Locking through the "Soo" canal, we were soon out on the great Lake Superior and hugging the northern shore. The weather was propitious, and we kept on deck most of the time. For the past twelve years my life had been spent on the plains in high altitudes, and this sniffing of the breeze direct from the fresh waters was a very much appreciated change. We called, as was the wont at the time, at every point on the lake, and finally came to Duluth, where we took the train for the west.

During my stay in the east the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway had come north, and, crossing the Northern Railway east of the Red River, was now advanced as far as the Red Lake River. Arriving at the latter point, we found to our dismay that the boat had left on the afternoon of the previous day with a full load for Fort Garry. "When would there be another boat?" No one knew. This place in all truth was "wild and woolly;" gambling and drinking dens and dancing halls practically

made up the town. The rapid building of the railway and the navigation during the season to this point had brought a full quota of these parasites of humanity to feed on the navvies and travellers who, when stranded here, were more or less at their mercy. Obtaining some lunch for my party in one of the tents, I went out to reconnoitre, and found that it was twenty miles across the country to Grand Forks, where one might possibly find some accommodation. I accosted a genuine specimen of the New England Yankee westernized, and found that he had a waggon and team, which I went to see, and he offered to drive me over to Grand Forks with my party for twenty dollars. I told him to hitch up, and then ran to notify my people to be ready.

In a very short time we were rolling over the prairie, grateful beyond expression to leave this place of wild lawlessness. To me the change was delightful. I was again on the plains, and perched on the top of some luggage, with a couple of children in hand lest they should jolt off, I thoroughly enjoyed the western air and scene. We had not gone more than five miles when I saw the smoke-stacks of a steamer. I watched and waited until I saw she was heading our way, and then I gave the wild western whoop, and our driver started and wanted to know

where the "Injuns" were. "There are the *engines*," I said, pointing to the smoke-stacks, which now and then would appear between the fringing of timber along the river's bank. "Jerusalem! there she is, sure enough. Well, pardner," he continued, "what shall we do?" "Drive over and head her off," was my answer, and across the prairie we made as rapidly as we could to intercept the steamer, which had left the railway crossing we had just now come from more than twenty-four hours since. Such was navigation on this tortuous stream.

Picking a suitable spot for the steamer to land at, we waited her appearance, and when she was sufficiently near I hailed, "Ship ahoy!" "What do you want?" cried the captain. "To go aboard," was my answer. "We are full and have no accommodation." "Never mind, Captain; shove her bow in and give us a plank," I answered. "I tell you we have no room," came back to us. "That is a matter of detail; take us on board," was my straight answer. Then there was a change of voice from the same man. "Is that you, Mr. McDougall?" was now the question. "Yes, Captain," I shouted back, and the bells jingled and the big wheel spokes rolled over, and right into the bank where we stood came the nose of the steamer, and in five minutes we with all luggage were on the boat. The tall

Yankee and I split the difference, that is, I gave him ten dollars and a warm shake of the hand; the bells jingled and over went the wheel, and we turned to find ourselves in a dense crowd of people seeking the west country. Every state-room and berth was occupied, and the saloon curtained off at night; one part given over to the women and children, and the balance chalked by the steward so as to give each man his two-by-six-feet on the floor with one pair of thin blankets. But we were on the steamer and moving on to the Red, and I was happy to have my party going to their destination.

On the boat I found Dr. Bryce and wife, they also newly married and, like ourselves, on the homeward journey. I also found on this much crowded steamer Commodore Kitson, the manager of the line, a typical old frontiersman. This was the beginning of the rush to Manitoba—the name there usually pronounced with a marked accent on the last syllable. The new country was now attracting some attention. It was three days from the time we boarded the steamer before we rounded the point into the Red, and the boat was actually four days making the run from the Crossing, a distance of only twenty miles across the country. Now we were out on the larger Red River and would make better time.



Reaching Grand Forks, I saw Mr. Kitson with his private secretary debark, and then there was a rush to the steward to secure the vacated stateroom, but the answer was uniform, "Already engaged," and in due time the steward came to me and said that Mr. Kitson had instructed him to keep the room for Mr. McDougall. I had not asked for it, yet here was a case of the last being first, and we were thankful for the kindly act of the old pioneer. However, I did not approach that stateroom for some time, as there were many who thought they had a prior claim to it.

Down the "Red River of the North" we headed with our steamer, the *International* Captain Amyot in command, laden with many tons of freight and crowded from the main to the hurricane deck with men and women seeking their fortune in this great free country. They were of all classes—professional, agricultural, mechanical—tradesmen of all sorts; also some of no particular occupation, nondescripts, who had come to the West thinking that perhaps this new strange land might locate them, for thus far in life they had found it impossible to locate themselves. A queer medley of nationalities they were; many of them Scotch, among whom the Professor (Dr. Bryce) took the lead, which, by the way, he has kept well, for he is

now, as I write, the honored Moderator of the General Assembly of the great Presbyterian Church in Canada, and, I believe, making his calling and election sure for the greater General Assembly of the first-born in the larger kingdom.

The last time I went down this muddy stream we were on a small barge, and our motive power big sweeps in the hands of stalwart men whose loins were girt about with Hudson's Bay sashes, and whose meat was pemmican. Four at a time, in six-hour turns, these men kept at it day and night without stop, and for eight days and nights we wound down from Georgetown, a city of two houses, even to Fort Garry and the Red River Settlement, of whose people and their habit of life a facetious Yankee said some years later, "Why, sir, everything is done out here by man's strength and stupidity," for as yet no modern machinery had come in, neither had it entered into the heads or hearts of any of these passive aboriginal peoples to dream of such. But now we are vibrant with the throb of our engines; every plank and bolt in our vessel is nervous with motion, and undoubtedly as we swing the bends of the river we are conscious of the beginning of a wonderful change. In this we have the advantage of our fellow-passengers, for we have some knowledge of the

country to be exploited, and in a small way its infinite possibilities are dawning upon us.

It was a beautiful Sabbath morning as we "crossed the Rubicon"—to wit, the forty-ninth parallel—and entered into our own domain. Dr. Bryce preached, while I acted as precentor and general "roustabout," and our service was well attended and much appreciated. It was well on in the afternoon that we began to touch the outer fringes of the old half-breed settlements. A crowd of new-comers were around me, and I was hurt to hear their language as they spoke of the English and Scotch and German and French mixed bloods and Indian peoples. These very "fresh" men were nasty and vulgar, and sometimes most shameful in their modes of expression. Presently I had my chance, for as we swept past a cluster of houses ranged in a row on the bank, a typical French half-breed in plains' costume came out of one house and entered another, and the crowd, as they noticed his flaxen hair and beard and clear white face, exclaimed: "There is a white man; he is no d—d breed, at any rate." Then I said: "There is just where you are mistaken, gentlemen, for that is a genuine mixed blood, and many of these are as white and as fair as yourselves; and in any case, why call them such names and use such nasty language towards

them? Whose fault is it, if it is any fault? Where did the Scotch and English and French come from? In all this you are belying yourselves, gentlemen, and I must say that I have felt hurt as I have mingled with you and listened to the tone of your conversation concerning these people. You are going into their country and will have more or less intercourse with them, and I advise you to be more careful, or at least be more courteous," and as I turned on my heel I added casually, "for I also am a half-breed." Later one of the party came to me curious to know if I really meant what I said. "Was I really a half-breed?" I laughingly told him that my mother was a pure-bred Englishwoman and my father a Scotch-Canadian, so I thought very reasonably that I was a half-breed. I have knocked about a lot and have been thrown into association with many peoples, but for sublime indifference to the sensibilities of other folk and the most flagrant selfishness the ordinary white man "takes the cake," and were it not for the leaven of Christianity we would be at war with all the rest of mankind.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Arrival at Fort Garry—Kindly received by Rev. Geo. Young and wife—Mr. Marshall—Wife and self start out alone on our long journey—"The steady jog"—A lordly Irishman—"Give him a terrible pounding for me"—A prairie fire—Meet with a party of fugitive Sioux—Participants in the Minnesota massacre—Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Audey—"You will do for the North-West, Mrs. McDougall."

It was in the waning of the Sabbath day that we rounded into the mouth of the Assiniboine and landed at Fort Garry, and there was a chill autumn darkness over the land as we walked down to the first Methodist parsonage ever built in what is now the Province of Manitoba. Mr. and Mrs. Young and their son George received us kindly and made us feel very much at home. We also met Mr. Marshall, of Owen Sound, who had but recently come to Manitoba, and who has continued even unto this day helping to found and build up the city and province.

It was now well on in October, and Mr. Young said, "You should stay here for the winter, John; there is plenty of work, and I will bear all responsibility in the matter." But I felt that we must go on to our own post of duty, and early next morning set out securing provisions



and outfit for the trip. On my way down from the plains the village of Winnipeg had assumed quite large proportions, but now as I walked through it I suddenly found myself north of the stores I wanted, having passed them *en route*. The horizon of my vision had grown, and this new place was now crude and small. My horses were out at Rat Creek, some seventy-five miles distant, but I had taken the precaution of ordering a "democrat" before going east, and this was now ready. So I bought a pony and set of harness, and loading our stuff on to the waggon and buying a Hudson's Bay blanket capote for my wife, we bade our good friends farewell and started on Tuesday afternoon on our real journey.

We had not loitered in the confines of civilization longer than sufficed us to purchase horse and rig and outfit, and now we are off. We have too much load to make time; nevertheless, we camp at Headingly with the Gowlers the first night, and make Poplar Point to camp with another Gowler for the second night. The third day we reach Rat Creek to find our friends, the McKenzies, glad to see us, and setting themselves with lavish hospitality to entertain our little party. My young wife was now beginning to awaken to the largeness of the West. Hitherto she had stood the journey

well and enjoyed it, but from this point we would indeed enter the wilderness.

I found my horses in good shape. Little Bob and Archie and my new brown and another older brown were glad to see me and fully ready for the road. I bought a cart and harness and more provisions, fixed everything ready, and then drove over westward to see my cousin John, who had established himself at this point. We spent a quiet Sunday at Burnside with the McKenzies, who, consequent upon father's visit to Ontario in 1867-8, had come out to Manitoba, and to-day rank among her most successful farmers and citizens. That one talk by father in the town of Guelph during the winter of 1867-8 had brought these instinctive makers of empire, and through them hundreds of others, to this land of rich promise. Just now they could not do enough for us, and the good old Scotch mother took my young wife to heart in such manner as to cheer her on her long, strange journey. As the season was now so late I failed utterly in my effort to find any one to attempt the road with us, so I prepared for a lonely journey. I divided my goods about evenly between the democrat and cart, giving Little Bob and Archie the work of pulling the former in turn, and the old brown mare and the pony I had just bought the latter. The new brown of Fort Pitt breeding I kept as my saddle-horse.

On the morning of October 15th we left the hospitable home of the McKenzies and headed westward, my little wife with democrat in the lead, the cart following, and myself in saddle driving both cart and loose horses. "Keep the steady jog, Lizzie," were my instructions to her who had vowed to obey me, and thus we rolled toward the setting sun. The days were short and we had to rise early and travel late to make time; the nights, too, were cold, and sometimes the days were stormy, but we kept steadily at it. Occasionally my wife would drop asleep with the steady jog step and the isolation of her vanguard station, and I would then shout cheerily to her and she would start afresh. By the tracks I knew that some company of freighters was not far ahead of us. A considerable portion of the country, too, was newly burnt, and I was feeling sore because of the careless act of some thoughtless man, and mentally breathing out threatenings and slaughter against him. We had reached the eastern border of what are known as the Beautiful Plains, north of where Carberry is now situated, when we met a party coming from the mouth of the South Branch. The leader was a big lordly-looking Irishman, a friend of Captain Butler, the author of "The Great Lone Land." At once he shouted out to me, "Do you know who is starting these abom-

inable prairie fires?" I said, "No, sir," and he began a tirade against any such person, at the same time threatening what he would do if he should catch him. While he was speaking I was looking ahead for Mrs. McDougall and the cart, when away beyond them I saw a man on foot and alone, and as I was watching him I saw that he stooped to the prairie, and up came a smoke and blaze. The villain was firing the grass. "There's your man," said I to the wrathful Irishman, and with an oath he turned his horse and galloped towards the culprit, while I cantered after my outfit. Presently my big gentleman turned and met us, and asked me to become his proxy. Said he, "You are going that way; will you just oblige me by giving that rascal a terrible pounding. I will be forever grateful if you will," and thus we parted. When we did come up to the half-drunken French half-breed I asked him where he was going, and he said that his party was ahead on their way to Fort Ellice, but that they had left him when he was drunk, and he was burning the grass so they would be without feed on the return journey. I told him to jump on my cart and ride, and while I did not pound the half-silly fellow, I did give him a fright which sobered him up. This pounding some one by proxy is an old trick of others besides the Irish race, but this

time moral suasion, I believe, did better, for the fellow promised me he would never again be so foolish and wicked.

It was late when we came up to the Fort Ellice party at Miry Creek. I saw that the whole party were more or less under the influence of whiskey, so I prudently kept the creek between us and camped a little lower down. I had noticed about dark a fire in the distance to the south-westward, and this was another reason for my stopping short of crossing the creek. About nine o'clock the wind brought this fire down on us at a great rate, and had the effect of sobering up to some extent my friends on the other side of the creek. Standing out as I did with my horses, I could see their frantic moves to round up their stock and load up the carts; then there was a cry of dismay and some one shouted "Powder! powder!" and in frantic haste they ran two of their carts down into the creek up to the axles, and soaking the blankets, covered the carts with them. It was a dark night, but this wild rushing flame with its clouds of reflecting smoke rolling down upon us was a gorgeous sight. I saw that I might save a few acres of feed by firing before the oncoming flash of flame reached us, and I went to work and succeeded in keeping the fire from my camp. In this I was much helped by the camp to the windward of



me, for these worked hard to protect their camp, and the spot being much used, the grass was short and close cropped, which favored us in our efforts. Like ten thousand demons in robes of flame the big fire swept past us—the creek was but a tiny check—and on westward it rolled, leaving all quiet in our vicinity. My wife had seen her first prairie fire and still lived, and at this she was at the time much surprised.

Early the next morning we forded the deep Miry Creek in safety, pushed on across the Little Saskatchewan and skirted along the south shore of Shoal Lake. Had one dry camp only between there and Bird Tail Creek. This was harder on our horses than on us, as we had a can of peaches, but we were very glad of a cup of tea at the Bird Tail Creek next morning. Before we reached that point, however, I experienced quite a shock. Something went wrong with the cart, and while I was fixing it Mrs. McDougall drove on, and with the windings of the road between the islands of timber was soon lost to sight. When I did start I rode right into a lot of hard-looking Sioux, and as I was in no mood to palaver with them until I could see what had happened in front, I was surrounded by these fellows, who rode back with me. Then when we met their women and children and whole camp moving, and still no sign of the democrat nor my wife,

I hustled that cart and those horses through the crowd, and was indeed glad to catch sight of the waggon-cover shaking as usual, for Mrs. McDougall had never let up on the steady jog. She was all this time serenely unconscious of what was happening, and it was well, for these were the fugitives from the massacre in Minnesota and a most lawless lot of Indians. I turned loose all the Stoney I was worth, and found one of the crowd who spoke a little Cree, and they began to find out that I was not altogether a tenderfoot. When they had told me where they came from and where they were going, and sought my approval of same, and when I had given them to understand that I had come from far, where people were many, and was to go far, even until I would be with some of their own kin near the Rocky Mountains, then they produced some papers they were carrying, and were anxious I should look at these and endorse the same, and thus with much protestation of mutual regard we parted. I straightway galloped after my wife and the cart and horses, and was exceedingly grateful to find these pounding on westward entirely oblivious of the fact that we had just now met with some of the participants in the horrible massacres of the early sixties, many of the victims of which we had become acquainted with on our way into this

country ; all of these, white and red alike, being the terrible sacrifice of life caused by the immorality and cupidity of men who had to do with the Indian Department of the United States. After our day camp we were glad to unhitch and breakfast beside the beautiful little Bird Tail Creek. While we were again hitching up, a Hudson's Bay factor and clerk, Messrs. McDonald and Audey, drove up. Seeing Mrs. McDougall harnessing her horse, the factor came out with a hearty "That's right, Mrs. McDougall. It does me good to see you take hold in that way ; you will do for the North-West." With Audey it was, "John, my dear fellow, how glad I am to see you," etc., and after we had said good-bye and they had gone on, he galloped back in great haste to apologize for calling me John. Only now had Mr. McDonald told him that I was duly ordained, and I laughed at his evident discomfiture and assured him that I was still John, only John ; and as he rode away I smiled at the thought of the hundreds of my Indian friends who would never know me by any other name than John.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

A half-breed's lingo—Origin of languages—Half way to Edmonton—Chief Factor McMurray—A bitter storm—First house at Batoche—Duck Lake and Fort Carlton—Fortunate meeting with my old friend, Jack Norris—Neché stuck fast in a creek—Another mishap—Winter with a vengeance—Bannock-making—Buried in snow—Camp-fire cheer—Sufferings of our horses—Brilliant night-scene—Neché's simplicity—"The man with the sharp axe"—My wife nearly frozen—Sandy McDonald, hero—A plucky exploit—Little Bob's plight—Narrow escape from freezing—Changing camp during the night—Overcome by cold and exhaustion—My wife's anxious night-watch—Arrival at Fort Pitt.

WE spent our first Sunday west of the crossing of the Assiniboine. I well remember the wild snow-storm of the Monday morning, and our driving for a couple of hours into its teeth, and how thankful we were when it ceased. We met a French half-breed that morning, and I inquired of him as to water on the road between here and the South Branch. He began his reply in Cree, then went into broken English, and was bringing in some French when I quietly interjected an inquiry if he could speak Cree. He laughingly apologised and then became intelligible, and I thought as I shook the snow from my beard and

rode after my wife that this was how languages had been formed. Here was a people who, if left to themselves long enough, would construct a distinct language out of a fusion of English, French, Cree and Saulteaux.

And now the nights were cold and the ice fast forming on the lakes and ponds. It was no picnic to take off one's shoes and break the thin ice by wading away out into shallow ponds in order to obtain water out of which to do our cooking and make tea; but such was now our daily and nightly experience as for another six days we rose early and travelled late, until on Saturday night we camped at the foot of the hill which was said to mark half way from Edmonton to Fort Garry. Here we spent our second Sunday, and during the day were joined by a party of Hudson's Bay Company officers. These men had been at Fort Ellice when we passed, and hearing from Messrs. McDonald and Audey of our journey westward, had chased us all the week, but had failed to come up. Had we not stopped for Sunday they would not have seen us, as our routes would diverge at Carlton, they going north from that point to Green Lake and the Athabaska. Chief Factor McMurray was of the party. Soon they went on and we were again alone. We had now spent two Sundays and fifteen travelling days with no other com-



pany but our two selves. My young wife had driven through several storms, and most of the early mornings and late evenings had suffered from the cold; yet she did not murmur nor in any other way chide me for bringing her into these hardships and this sublimity of isolation.

That Sunday evening the sky looked ominous, and on rising before daylight Monday morning I was not surprised to find we were into a driving storm, and that it was more or less dead ahead. Nevertheless, we started early and drove into it; the season was so advanced I did not dare lose the day loitering in camp. So on we drove through snow and sleet and cold wind, and when night came sought shelter in a dry bluff of timber. The snow was now thick on the ground, but I rushed around and got on a big blazing fire, covered the cart with the tent and made things as cheerful as I could, while my little wife helped, as she was most willing to do, though all this was very new to her. The next day was extremely cold, and when we came out to the South Branch we found the river full of floating ice. The first house built where Batoche now stands was at this time in process of erection, and some people were living in one end of it. I took my wife in there to warm, and was made very welcome by the French half-breed woman in charge; then I ran down to the

ferry and was dismayed to see the scow away down the river and half-way out of the water. However, I found a native and told him that if he would get another man and bring that scow up and cross us I would give him five dollars. I saw that the case was urgent; another night's frost might make this river impassable for many days. Fortunately by dint of push we got across by dusk, and I was thankful to camp a little way up from the river.

The next day we faced a snow-storm all the way by Duck Lake over to old Fort Carlton, which I passed and drove right on down to the river, as I saw that somebody had just crossed and was even then climbing the long hill on the other side. I shouted and made this party hear, and the answer came back, "There is no one to take the scow over." But I continued to shout, and then came welcome words of recognition, "Is that you, John?" and I shouted across a vigorous "Yes." Then there was a change of attitude, and soon a couple of men came down the hill on the dead jump, while I galloped back to the fort to look up a man. I was directed to some lodges near by, where I found a man named Neche willing to go with me, and I hustled him down to the river. By this time the scow was across to us, and we soon had our horses and rigs aboard. I found my rescuer was

my old friend, Jack Norris. "I would not have come back for any one else," he said, "for I am in a great hurry; my carts have just gone on from the top of the bank. But I am glad, I assure you, to see you and your wife. I tell you, John, we're in for it; I'm afraid winter is upon us, and we're a long way from home, my boy. But if anybody can go through we can, can't we, John?" and thus Jack talked as he worked, and soon we were across the big river.

It was now the first day of November, 1872, and winter was setting in earlier than in any of my previous years in the North-West. "This climate is going back on us, John," said my friend Jack, and verily it was a revelation to me, this precipitate rushing of winter. Jack Frost was strengthening his grip with every passing day. We camped near Norris and his outfit that night; he had a big string of carts and with him was another party, a free trader. Early the next morning we started, but had not gone far when we came to a boggy, swampy creek, axle-deep. It was frozen over, but the ice was not strong enough to bear either horses or rigs. Jack coming up, he and I plunged our horses into the ice and smashed a channel for the carts and waggon; but when Mrs. McDougall drove in her democrat stuck about the middle of the stream, and when Little Bob really

bent to it he hauled the shaft cross-bar right out of the shafts, and then we were forced to wade in and partially unload the waggon. I carried my wife ashore, and then with friend Jack, heeding not the ice-cold water, backed and pulled until our waggon was on the other shore. By this time we were armored with ice, and were glad enough to reach the nearest bluff of dry wood and get thawed out. The weather now was snapping cold, and if this kept up the swamps and creeks would bear by the morrow. My Neche proved to be a good-natured fellow, willing and obedient, and a great help now that we consumed so much more firewood and there was so much camp work to do. Jack and his party had quite a time crossing the stream, but by evening they were encamped near us.

We had not gone more than a few hundred yards from camp next morning when the iron axle of the democrat snapped off near the inner end of the hub of the wheel, and down went the back part of the rig, and away rolled the wheel. It was fortunate that the mishap came to the rear part, else it had thrown my wife to the ground, and we might have had a serious accident as well as a runaway. Here we were long leagues from a blacksmith-shop, and as yet without sufficient snow for a sleigh. I hired a cart from the party travelling with Jack, put a

pole under my waggon, and resuming our journey camped that night at Bear's Paddling Lake. Mrs. McDougall now not only had the cold and wind to contend with, but with this she had to ride in the rough wooden cart, which at any time was a hard proposition, but now on the frozen ground was infinitely worse. However, I determined to fix up the democrat on its three wheels and pole so that she would be able to ride in that with some comfort—or less discomfort. Here Jack did not come up until next day, and in the meantime the storm had intensified so that I did not deem it prudent to travel. Down came the snow thick and fast, and by the third day at Bear's Paddling Lake we had eighteen inches of it on the level and immense drifts in places. Here was winter with a vengeance. As soon as the storm stayed we moved on and camped together for one night, but the next morning the others seemed loth to start, so we left them, and, as it proved, saw them no more on that trip.

Oh, the weary miles of slow, arduous travel of those cold winter days! Snow heavy on the level, hard and deep in the drifts, and these latter were many; every little hollow and water-course and frozen creek full of it. "Fort Pitt Brown" led the way, or rather I led him, as we broke through the drifts backwards and forwards



several times, beating down the deep snow ; then came Neche, with the two carts, while Mrs. McDougall brought up the rear with her three-wheeled democrat, and thus we toiled and struggled only to make but slow progress. Archie and Little Bob had shoes on, which now threatened to be their death, for not only were these cold and heavy, but, worse still, they cut the grass so that when the horses pawed the deep snow away they left but little to feed on, and it made my heart sick to see the flesh wearing off them almost hourly. In turns they pulled the broken waggon and their poor young mistress, who must often have thought we were destined never to reach our journey's end. Fortunately our provisions, of which I had laid in a good stock at the Portage and Rat Creek, were holding out well. Every night we made bannocks, Mrs. McDougall mixing the dough while Neche and I did the baking. Our one frying-pan was a small one, and it would take ten bannocks of its size to last our party for the twenty-four hours. Mrs. McDougall would eat less than one, but Neche and I could easily finish the other nine and more. Appetites "furnished while you wait" on the western plains! The effort was to daily move our bannock-baking some few miles nearer home.

One bitterly cold evening we camped in an

open bit of country between White Earth Creek and the Turtle River, where there were a few scattered willow groups and the remnant of a poplar bluff that had been burned over. We put our tent up for that night—fortunately enough, as it proved—and, finishing our baking and necessary camp work, we lay down to rest. In the night there came up a wild storm which effectually buried us. I was fully conscious it was daylight, but as the storm still raged furiously our only course was to lie still; the more so as it was some miles to any timber shelter. Here we were, buried from the rest of the world as effectually as one could conceive of; the nearest human beings the party we had left some days since, and now perhaps forty miles behind us; not a solitary settler within many scores of miles, and winter, solid winter, everywhere. My anxiety was mostly concentrated on our horses; would they survive such a storm and extreme cold? and where would they wander to on this big plain if yet alive? There we lay from about nine p.m. until two or three p.m. the next day, when, a lull coming in the storm, Neche and I dug our way out of this white cavern to look upon the storm-lashed world around us. We found the north-west wind still fresh, but moderating, and we also found a great wall of snow which had caught in some willows near by

and grown to enormous proportions, and which we determined to make our shelter. To work we went to make a camp at the foot of this big snow-bank. Digging away the snow and laying a flooring of frozen willows, we made a big fire in front, and then I ventured to clear out a passage into the tent and bring my wife out from her snowy retreat. This was a great relief, even if it meant coming out into the open air tense with cold and also into one of the most wintry landscapes that one could behold. But when we had got our robes and bedding out and the camp in shape, with the kettle on the big fire and food thawing, then our horizon enlarged. Life was before us again, and we could afford to laugh and sing and be joyful. Were it not that the question of our horses and their whereabouts was constantly on my mind I would have been perfectly happy.

Our meal over, I left Neche to gather up wood, for the night now approaching promised to be bitterly cold, and started out into the deep snow to look for traces of the horses. I ran straight with the storm for a while, then I came upon a partially filled track of one animal. This I followed and presently came to Little Bob, standing in the shelter of a small bush and completely covered with snow. At first I thought he was frozen dead; but as I drew near

the faithful fellow raised his head and neighed me a welcome, and while I felt like crying, yet I went joyously to work to clean him down and rub him back to warmth and life. By and by with a nicker and rub of the nose on my shoulder he said, "There, John, I feel very much better, and now I will help you to find the other chaps," and the wise old fellow started on a good trot through the deep snow, while I followed on the run. Soon we were beside the rest of our horses, and found them also in an icy covering of frost and snow. The poor brutes had been sweating when we turned them out the night before, and the perspiration had frozen and served to hold the snow as it fell. I spent about an hour giving them a good rubbing down with swamp grass, and noting that the shelter was better here, I said good-night to them and made a bee-line for camp, where I found my wife very anxious about both John and his horses. Neche had hustled and rustled and got together a huge pile of wood, and while the cold was increasing I did not apprehend any more storm for that night.

Hitherto my wife had either the tent or the covered cart for shelter, but now she was to pass her first night in the full open camp. The stars like diamonds and brilliants were gemming the heavens above us, and the aurora ever and anon

swept the sky athwart our vision, painting the world overhead in gorgeous hues. As we alternated in position between our big fire and the frozen atmosphere all around us we could not help but look and admire and wonder. Speaking of the aurora Neche said, "The storm is over and the dancers are out for a good time; their hearts are joyful to-night." And with our horses found and living, ourselves in the full vigor of health, and with plenty of provisions in camp, we felt we had reason to be joyful also. If any of our friends had approached that lonely, snowy, frosty camp that night in November of 1872 they would have heard no lamentations, no sighings for the onions and garlies of old Egypt. Ours was an optimistic camp, and in full faith we cooked our bannocks and crunched our pemmican, made our beds, said our prayers, and calmly laid us down to sleep. There was no undressing as we travelled; as we worked even so we slept, with the added weight of our bedding.

Long before day we were up digging out the tent and releasing the carts and waggons from their covering of snow. With the first peep of dawn I was away after the horses. Oh, how I longed for a pair of snow-shoes! Running and wading without them was very heavy work. Finding our horses all in good shape, once more



we were off. We did not now attempt to follow the summer cart trail. Sometimes we touched it and crossed it, but as everything was now frozen solid we took a straight course, or as straight as the big drifts would allow us. That night being Saturday, we considered we were fortunate in striking a bluff of poplar timber to make our camp in and wherein to spend Sunday.

Neché was a pagan, some men would say, but he fully believed in the Good Spirit and was pleased to join in our morning and evening devotion; he said it did him good. He had gone to war, had taken scalps, had brought home horses he had not paid for, but in all this he did not consider that he had made himself a sinner more than the rest of mankind, and certainly we found him a true fellow, courteous, considerate, patient, even chivalrous in his conduct to Mrs. McDougall. He was simple of mind, and I, who perhaps should not have done so, could not resist sometimes playing upon this childish simplicity. For instance, we consumed a great amount of wood at our night camps, and when it was approaching time to camp I would, as I led the way, begin an oration to the trees: "Oh! ye trees that lift your tops heavenward and for many moons have stood, stately and proud, looking down upon your surroundings; ye who have drank in the dews of many mornings, and

bathed in the rains of many summers, and sucked up the moisture from the breast of Mother Earth; hear me, ye trees of the forest, and as ye hear tremble, for your enemy is at hand. Even behind me comes the man of the strong arm and the sharp axe; verily he is now approaching, and soon you will lie low." Thus I would talk, and Neche would laugh and chuckle and endorse me: "It is true, my master is giving you fair warning; yes, the strong man and sharp axe are coming," and when we stopped it was amusing to see the despatch of the fellow as he unharnessed his horses and let them out of the carts, all the while repeating to himself, "Yes, he is coming, the strong man, and he is even now going for his sharp axe. Yes, oh, ye trees! soon we will be among you, and presently you will fall to our camp. I will carry you in lengths for our fire." I can assure my readers Neche would work around those encampments with a will that ensured to us plenty of firewood, and this was most essential to our well-being at the time. Indeed, Neche and I were busy from early morning until late at night; there was no cessation on that trip even for Sunday; it was either work or freeze. Many a coolie engulfed us so that we had to dig out both horse and cart, and every hour of the day was a struggle for existence as well as an endeavor to prosecute

our journey. Monday was an intensely cold day, and we were in a more or less open country, moving along on the north side of the Red Deer Hills, when, in looking back, I saw Archie coming along without his driver. I hurried back and found my wife struggling in the deep snow in the effort to follow. She had become so cold that she was forced to alight to try and warm herself, but could make such slow progress through the deep snow that she was now almost at the point of freezing. I gently chided her for not calling out, and then Neche and I hustled up beside a bluff of timber and soon had a roaring fire. I spread the robes and bedding down beside it, and was glad in a short while to find my wife coming to herself again. After that I had my way in providing for her comfort. I put a pair of big moccasins on her feet, and then wrapping her up well, took the seat out of the waggon and deposited her in the waggon-box, allowing the horse to come on without any driving except what we needed to give him at hills and ticklish spots on the roads.

It was on a Sunday that a runner from Norris's company caught up with our camp. He was a young native from Kildonan, on the Red River, Sandy McDonald by name. Their provisions were going fast, and Sandy had volunteered to take the one pair of snow-shoes they

had and go on to Fort Pitt, procure provisions and a dog-train there, and come back to meet his party. He was very lightly clad, and after giving him his dinner we made him take one of our blankets, which I belted about him in such fashion as to enable him to travel without being encumbered by it. He had never been in this country before, and was now going on description, aided by a large measure of natural instinct. I felt anxious about the young fellow as he bravely stepped out, facing the sharp, keen wind, and disappeared over the hill into what was to him the unknown. I gave him four days, if he was successful, to meet us, and on the fourth night I purposely camped on a hill in order that our fire-light might be seen from the west side for a long distance. Sure enough, along about eight o'clock I heard the old familiar "Marse" coming over the hills, and was glad to know Sandy was alive and had been to the fort. He had a very heavy load of pemmican and dried meat, and a nice bale of the latter sent me by my old friend Philip Tait. He also brought us news of the West that he had gleaned from the men of the fort. Declining our invitation to stay, he took our trail and continued on in the night to the relief of his party. Sandy displayed a marvellous spirit of heroism in that lonely trip of five days and nights through storm and


bitter cold and without trail or knowledge of country, showing no small ability to endure and rare instinct and pluck to thus successfully carry out his hazardous enterprise.

It took us three days of hard work to make Fort Pitt, and it was during the evening of one of these days that Little Bob, who was taking his turn in one of the carts, stood stock-still. I sprang to his side and asked, "What is the matter, Bob?" and he looked at me and said, "I cannot do any more, John," and while the tears came to my eyes I jerked the harness from him and turned him out to follow if he could. Poor little Bob, it cut me to the quick to see him in such condition. I hung the harness on the cart and left the whole load standing in the snow, and it was not until late that night that Bob came up to the camp. The noble fellow had kept at his post until his strength was about done.

Snow deepening, cold continuous, horses losing flesh and heart every day, but to-night we are camping within ten miles of Fort Pitt; surely we can make that post to-morrow. Our camp is down in the valley of a creek. Above us is a clump of spruce, but to reach the timber the pull will be a hard one, so we conclude to stay in the open and make a shelter of the carts and waggons. Neche and I work hard packing wood and brush



and getting our camp into shape, and as the night is clear we hope for a quiet time, and presently we lie down to rest. All goes well for a while, but before morning I wake up chilled through and through, and then become aware that a big storm is tearing down the valley. All day we had struggled hard breaking the way for the horses and carts. Making camp also was hard work, and my clothes had become wet with perspiration, and now I was freezing. I wondered how Neche might be faring and called to him, "How are you, my friend?" "Cold, cold," was the answer. "We must do something or die," I said, so I crawled out from under the covers, first asking my wife if she were cold, and glad to hear her answer, "No, I am quite warm." I told her to remain still, that we were going into the woods up the creek, and when we had made a camp and had started a good fire I would come for her. Then Neche and I faced the storm, which now was raging wild; already the snow had blotted out our camp. Into the night we struggled, and reaching the spruce grove, hurriedly made a shelter. All the while I was most anxious about my wife. Would she stay there alone? If she should start up and come out of the shelter of bedding and snow, she might wander and perish; so just as soon as we had a fire going and a brush camp



made right in the densest part of the grove, we hurried back, happily, and to my intense relief, to find that my wife had in this instance, at any rate, obeyed her husband. Neche took the kettles and cups and a supply of provisions, and I gathered up some of the bedding; then telling my wife to follow me, we again started for the brush. By this time the storm was so violent that we had difficulty making our way against it. The drifts were piling up like miniature mountains. I warned my wife to not lose sight of me, and finally by dint of crawling and wading and struggling we reached the woods. Oh, how grateful were the shelter and the smell of the spruce pine, and the blaze of our big fire! We settled ourselves down beside the latter, and in a little while Neche had a steaming hot cup of tea ready for us. In my case, however, the reaction was too great, for as soon as I had taken a few swallows of this I fell over unconscious for the time, and when I awoke the day was upon us. I found that my wife had covered me up after making sure I was breathing naturally, and had kept up the fire while Neche and I slept. Poor girl, I could imagine what she endured during the long, lonely hours of that night vigil in a wild country she as yet knew little about. When I came to from my unconsciousness and the dead sleep of exhaustion and saw her sitting beside

me, I felt ashamed at what seemed to me my display of weakness, but she met my inquiring look with a smile of glad welcome back to life and duty.

We breakfasted, dug out our carts and wag-gons, hunted up the horses and again pushed on. Keeping at it steadily, we reached Fort Pitt in the late evening, having missed my friend Tait, who had gone out to meet us by another way. He was back, however, in an hour or so, having found our trail a few miles out, and gave us a hearty welcome.



## CHAPTER XIX.

Welcome at Fort Pitt—Flat-sleds and snow-shoes—Norris and party arrive—A unique incident—On to Victoria—Sandy accompanies us—Order of march—Little Bob clear grit—A friendly French half-breed—Arrive at Victoria—David a proud father—A run to Edmonton and Pigeon Lake—A welcome visit from father—Christmas at Edmonton—Home at last—Unique bridal tour—My wife a heroine—*Au revoir*.

WE had spent two Sabbaths and seventeen travelling days between Forts Carlton and Pitt—days and nights of extreme hardship. This was a bridal tour by no means lacking in the elements of romance. Here we were now in a Hudson's Bay fort and among friends, the gentleman in charge, Mr. McKay, and his two assistants, Philip Tait and John Sinclair, all old friends of mine, giving us a right hearty welcome. Moreover, they despatched two dog-trains to bring in our stuff from the cart, and then helped me rearrange my travelling equipment. I decided to leave my carts and waggon and take in their place two horse toboggans or flat-sleds. On the front of one of these we made a carry-all for Mrs. McDougall. My friends also supplied me with a pair of snow-shoes, a

most welcome gift; and in addition Mr. Tait lent me two fresh horses, as two of mine were nearly used up. The only difficulty was to find a man to accompany us to Victoria, for Neche could not go with us farther than this point. He had done his duty splendidly, and after settling with him we reluctantly bade him good-bye.

In the meantime Sunday came on, and I had the opportunity of holding two services with the people of the fort and some Indians in camp near by. On Sunday who should come in but Jack Norris and young Sandy, and here was our chance. Sandy wanted to go on, and Jack was willing that I should have him with me. Jack reported a "terrible time"; he had left his party some sixty or seventy miles back, and had come on to obtain flat-sleds, having decided to abandon his carts until spring. He told us of a most pathetic incident that had happened on the way. One of their horses had played out, and, as I had done with Little Bob, they had turned him loose to follow. The faithful animal had done this up to the measure of his ability, but when he failed to come into the camp one night they went back in the morning to look for him, and found him actually standing with head to camp, frozen dead. I have seen and known of many a horse, worn out with hardship







“Erect on his legs, with head to storm and camp, and dead !” (Page 293.)

and hunger, lying down to die, but here was a case unique so far as I know—the poor beast erect on his legs, with head to storm and camp, and dead!

Such was Archie's condition that I had to leave him at the fort. One of the Hudson's Bay employees, knowing him by repute, offered me a good price for him, and I let him go; but Little Bob I could not leave, and I was fortunate in securing a keg of wheat from Mr. McKay to keep him alive. My old Brown and new Fort Pitt Brown were still to the front, fresh and strong, and with the two colts lent me by Mr. Tait, and with flat-sleds and snow-shoes and Sandy, I was quite hopeful as to the rest of the journey.

Bidding the hospitable friends at Fort Pitt a grateful adieu, we started for Victoria, our next objective point. Our line of march now was: Myself ahead on snow-shoes; Fort Pitt Brown following, pulling a long toboggan with Mrs. McDougall carefully wrapped in the coffin-like carry-all and a couple of trunks strapped on behind her; then Old Brown in another sleigh with our travelling kit and everything else lashed on to it, and Sandy and the two spare horses following, with Little Bob bringing up the rear. Thus we began our trackless journey through the deepening snow and strengthening winter. Of necessity our progress was slow. I

went straight from point to point, making as few curves as possible. Sometimes after forging ahead a bit I retraced my steps and met Brown, and then doubled back, thus giving him the benefit for miles every day of my three tracks. Often as in the vigor of health and strength I took a run on the snow-shoes I heartily wished that my party could keep up with me for a few days and we would soon cover a long distance. But this was impossible at the time; there was nothing for it but heavy and continuous plodding. And Bob, brave fellow that he was, proved himself clear grit. Sometimes it would be nine o'clock when he would herald his approach with a neigh, and I would run out and give him a pat and a welcome, and feed him some of the wheat. Then at our noon spell, if he had not come up, I would hollow a small basin in the snow and put a few handfuls of grain in the track for him. Thus we journeyed on through storm and drift and bleak cold. All the while I could not resist the feeling of shame at my act in bringing that brave little woman from the east on such a journey; but never by hint or act did my good wife indicate that she regretted the sacrifice she had made.

On steadily we forged our way by Frog Lake and Moose Creek and the Dog Rump and Egg Lake. Poor horses, how their legs bled as the

snow crusted. New Brown led the way all the time. Faithfully following behind my lead on snow-shoes, he climbed the drifts, broke them down and pulled his load, failing not either in flesh or spirit. A most wonderful horse was New Brown. The night before we reached Victoria we camped with a French half-breed family by the name of McGillis. This was a pleasant break in the journey, for their hospitality was genuine and natural. The women were all greatly interested in Mrs. McDougall; they thought she was a plucky girl to undertake such a journey, and made her blush by telling her she must have loved her husband very much to leave her people and come so far to this big, strange country. However, they said, "John was a good fellow." At any rate their shanty was warm, and it was no small relief not to have to make camp, nor to perform the pivotal act of turning around to the fire or from it every few minutes. Really it was a pleasant change, and we made up our beds on the floor and slept in peace—that is, it would have been peace if I could have forgotten my horses, bleeding and sore with the almost constant crust we had come through for days, and which had been especially bad to-day. Poor Bob was the worst. Thus far he had kept up, though sometimes coming in late, and always had announced his arrival with a cheerful neigh



which said, "Still alive and hopeful!" But we had yet a long day under these conditions before we would reach Victoria, and I felt anxious as to how Bob would stand it. From my horses I fell to thinking about these people under whose humble roof we were camped. These were not settlers; no, no, only wintering. The head of the colony, Cuthbert McGillis, was a genuine type of the mingling of the two races, the careless, happy, plutocratic habitant with the nomadic Indian, the truly aboriginal man; a mixture of semi-civilization and absolute barbarism. A gigantic, curly-headed, splendid specimen of physical humanity he was, ever ready to fight anybody, but the friend of everybody. A life-long plainsman, a genuine buffalo eater, he is now away with the men of his party looking for meat one hundred and fifty miles west of here. We have been friends ever since we first met. His big, hearty "John, my friend," rings in my ear as I write, and I often wonder that such men should ever have come to take the stand some of them did in 1870 and later. Certainly the trouble did not originate with themselves; of this my years of kindly intercourse and interdependence make me very sure. These are not the material out of which disloyalty comes as indigenous to the soil.

Early the next morning, with a hearty hand-

shake all around from these native women and children, and a sincere "bon voyage," we are off to again take up our slow and solemn procession over the Snake Hills and through the Vermilion valley and across the White Mud Heights. The day is short, and it is dark ere we cross the White Mud River. My wife is beginning to think this road interminable and the North-West without end. In the latter thought she is about right so far as things terrestrial go, and the generations to come will still be turning up fresh resources and endless wealth in this wonderful land. On through the sombre, pine-shadowed trail leading by the Smoking Creek, and we strike the beautiful valley north of Victoria. Little Bob is on his last strength. Presently he comes to a stop, utterly fagged, and I gently coax and push him up the hill a little farther. But I see that it is no use; we must go on and then come back to his relief, and about 9 p.m. we bring up at my brother's house, where we are welcomed most heartily. Here I found my eldest little daughter, Flora, but was pained to find my good sister-in-law in terrible distress with an ulcerated breast. Within the last few weeks their first-born, a fine little girl, had come upon the scene, and now the young mother was undergoing one of those great sacrifices which ever and anon come to the

motherhood of our humanity. David had been away on the plains hunting buffalo and grisly bears, and was caught in the same early storm we had been struggling through; but he was with a strong party and much nearer home, and he had but recently returned to find himself a father. A fonder or more attentive one I had never seen. The little tot had but to move or whimper and David was all alive, be it day or night. To him the responsibility of parenthood had come in full force, and I was proud to witness such affection and true manhood in my brother. After asking about us, the next question was as to our horses, and when I mentioned Bob standing on the trail about two miles back, David at once exclaimed, "We must go for him right off." But I said, "No, we will take him a bundle of hay and a little barley, and let him eat and gather strength, and he will come in himself." Sandy immediately volunteered to take the hay and barley back to Bob, and though wearied with the long day's tramp this willing fellow got out one of David's horses, hitched him to a sleigh, threw on a bundle of hay and some barley, and drove back to find Bob just where we had left him. Leaving him the feed he returned, and we anxiously awaited developments, meanwhile seeking to do what we could

for our sick sister, who was delighted to have another sister come into her home for a time. While at breakfast the next morning we heard a loud neigh, as much as to say, "I am upon the scene once more," and there was Little Bob, head up and proud at having survived all the hardships and loss of blood and the cold and starvation he had come through. It is needless to say he was taken into a warm stable and looked after with all care; our whole family had an interest in that faithful little horse.

I concluded to leave my wife and horses at Victoria, take a train of dogs, and go on to Edmonton and Pigeon Lake. Mrs. McDougall required the rest, and she was needed in the home of my brother. Certainly, too, my horses needed a chance to mend and heal, for we still had another hundred and fifty miles ahead of us ere we should reach home. That afternoon I was off on the jump with a train of borrowed dogs, and camping alone for part of the night reached Edmonton early the next day. Father was well pleased but not wholly surprised to see me. "I knew you would come," were his words of greeting; others had given me up, but he had not. I spent a delightful evening and night between the Mission and the fort, where my brother-in-law, Richard Hardisty, was in

charge, and went on to Pigeon Lake next day, where I found Donald with everything in order. I was welcomed most heartily by all the Indians and half-breeds in the vicinity, and held a number of services. Arranging with Donald for some changes in the little home, I returned to Edmonton, whence I was accompanied back to Victoria by my sister Libby. I was grieved to find my sister-in-law worse, and suggested that we at once send for father. This was agreed to, and a smart man and a train of first-class dogs were despatched to Edmonton for him. In an incredibly short time father was on the scene, and, I am glad to say, was instrumental in relieving and helping our patient.

After a day or so in company with father, we continued our journey westward, leaving Little Bob to David's skilled care, and with Fort Pitt Brown still fresh and fat and pulling his new mistress, we made good time to Edmonton. The weather continued cold and the snow was deepening all the while. There had been no such winter on the Saskatchewan in all my experience. At Edmonton we met some new arrivals, notably Donald Ross, who had come in by way of the Peace River, and being quite a singer and amateur elocutionist, was a great help in the social life of the place. We spent Christmas



with the Edmonton folk, and thoroughly enjoyed the rest and fun of the holiday season in this far-away upland centre. Here was a small world in itself, isolated and alone. No mail, no telegraphs, only a few Hudson's Bay Company traders and missionaries and adventurers, and yet the Sabbath services and week-night entertainments of the winter of 1872-3 would do credit to many a larger place. Indeed, had these hardy pioneers not strained to keep up in those things which appeal to the mental and spiritual, there would have been a terrible lapsing into barbarism. Lectures and literary entertainments and concerts, as also a growing interest in church work, kept these men and women shoulder to shoulder with the best in any country. In all this father took the lead, and was much respected and revered by both the white and the red men.

Between Christmas and the New Year we pushed on to our own home, taking with us my two older girls, Flora and Ruth. Again we were facing the deep snow and extreme cold, and still Fort Pitt Brown was to the front, as strong and faithful as ever. Reaching Pigeon Lake without further adventure, we were at the end of our long journey. Two months and a half had elapsed since we left Portage la Prairie, and con-

siderably over three months from our leaving eastern Canada. Long weary miles we had journeyed, with cold camps, deep snows, intense frosts and blinding snow-storms as accompaniments; but here we were at last, well and strong and thankful. And our people at the lake were also thankful. Donald and all the rest of the natives welcomed our coming, and soon the chimneys of our two-roomed shanty were belching forth sparks and smoke, and by New Year's eve we were comfortably domiciled. My wife had undergone great hardships. Perhaps there never had been just such another bridal trip as this we had come safely through. To start thoroughly prepared for a winter trip such as ours would be hard enough in all truth, but to be caught as we were, almost wholly unprepared, while yet six hundred miles intervened between us and our destination, added tenfold to the dangers and difficulties. Truly my little wife, who bravely endured all this without a murmur, deserves to be ranked among the heroines of frontier life.

And now the time has come to close my present narrative. In these pages the reader has accompanied me in my wanderings from the autumn of 1868 down to the eve of New Year's day, 1873. We have travelled together over new and strange

fields, have witnessed many scenes in the wild life that in those days prevailed throughout our great western domain, and now for the time being I will say farewell, trusting ere long to resume the story of my early experiences on the mission fields of the Canadian West.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN McDUGALL.







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